Arkadij Naiditsch
Csaba Balogh

Best fighting games of 2012–2015

Carlsen vs Li Chao

24.d5!!

Chess Evolution

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Best fighting games of 2012–2015

Cover designer
Piotr Pielach

Typesetting
Piotr Pielach ‹www.i-press.pl›

First edition 2016 by Chess Evolution

Best fighting games of 2012–2015
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ISBN 978-83-944290-2-7

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Chess Evolution
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e-mail: info@chess-evolution.com
website: www.chess-evolution.com

Printed in Poland

KEY TO SYMBOLS

= Equality or equal chances

⩲ White has a slight advantage

⩱ Black has a slight advantage

± White is better

∓ Black is better

+- White has a decisive advantage

-+ Black has a decisive advantage

∞ unclear

⩯ with compensation

⇄ with counterplay

↑ with initiative

→ with an attack

∆ with the idea

□ only move

N novelty

! a good move

!! an excellent move

? a weak move

?? a blunder

!? an interesing move

?! a dubious move

+ check

mate

INTRODUCTION

Useful information for our valued readers.

››› The book contains the 50 best fighting games from 2012 to 2015.

››› The games were selected and analyzed by the authors GM Arkadij Naiditsch and GM Csaba Balogh.

››› Most of the games are taken from the highest-level tournaments, such as Wijk aan Zee, FIDE Grand Prix series, Olympiads etc.

››› Most of the games are played by top Grandmasters: Carlsen, Anand, Kramnik, Aronian, Caruana and many, many more of the world’s best chess-players.

››› The games are sorted in chronological order, from 2012 through to 2015.

EDITORIAL PREFACE

We are proud to present our fourth book in a series of 5 — “Best fighting games of 2012–2015”.

It was very interesting work trying to select and analyse the 50 best fighting games from the past 4 years: the choice was so wide! We were aiming to find the most exciting, spectacular and, of course, useful attacking ideas which might also occur in our own practical games.

The main idea behind this book stands out clearly: We try to reduce the importance of opening theory, and rather get inside the workings of the best chess-playing brains on the planet in an attempt to explain the most complex attacking ideas in a simple and understandable way to any chess lover.

Another very important point of the book which we are proud of is, we have not used much ’engine’ assistance during our commentary on the games. We try to see the game the way we would do in a practical game, which makes the commentaries very special — which in practice puts the reader fully in the shoes of the world-class players; this is exactly the best way to improve our own chess level.

Sadly, nowadays, we have more-and-more computer analyses and we can hear chess amateurs judging the play even of Carlsen. Yes, you can find tactical mistakes with an engine at home — but the question is, can you do the same during your practical game over the board ?! Chess is a game where everyone is making mistakes — and this is what it is all about in the current book!

We would advise all our readers to take out a real chessboard and enjoy these beautiful masterpieces. This is how we learned to play chess and this is why we still enjoy every wonderful game, even after almost 20 years of being professional chess players!

Yours,
Arkadij Naiditsch & Csaba Balogh

GAME 1
V. Kramnik (2801)
L. Aronian (2820)
Zurich Chess Challenge
Zurich SUI (3)
24.04.2012
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We are in the 3rd game (out of 6) of the friendly match between Kramnik and Aronian; the first match in history between two players with a 2800+ ELO rating. This game was, probably, one of the most spectacular ones in the match!

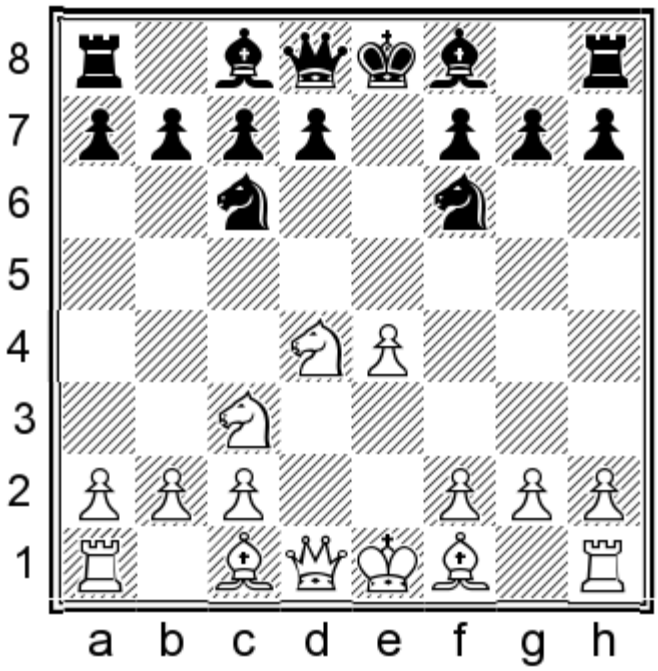
1.e4

We don't see Kramnik playing 1.e4 often, but maybe he chose to change his first move after losing a horrible game in the 1st round, when he played 1.d4.

1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3

What a surprising choice of opening by White! Who could expect that such an opening guru as Kramnik would choose this "boring" line?

3...♘f6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘xd4



5...♗c5

This came as a huge surprise to me. Why not 5...♗b4 going into the old lines, where nobody has been able to show how to play for an advantage in the last 30 years? Usually, White chooses this line to make a draw out of the opening. In the interview after the game, Aronian said that he wanted to create some "action" — well, he achieved his goal!

6.♗e3!?

Yes, finally we see something out of Kramnik's preparation. The main choice would be 6.♘xc6 bxc6 7.♗d3

6...♗b6 7.♕d2

From here on we are in an almost totally unknown position, after only 7 moves! Sort of a main line here is: 7.♘xc6 bxc6 8.e5 ♗xe3 9.fxe3 ♘d5 with a crazy position.

7...0-0 8.0-0-0 ♖e8

Very logical play by Black.

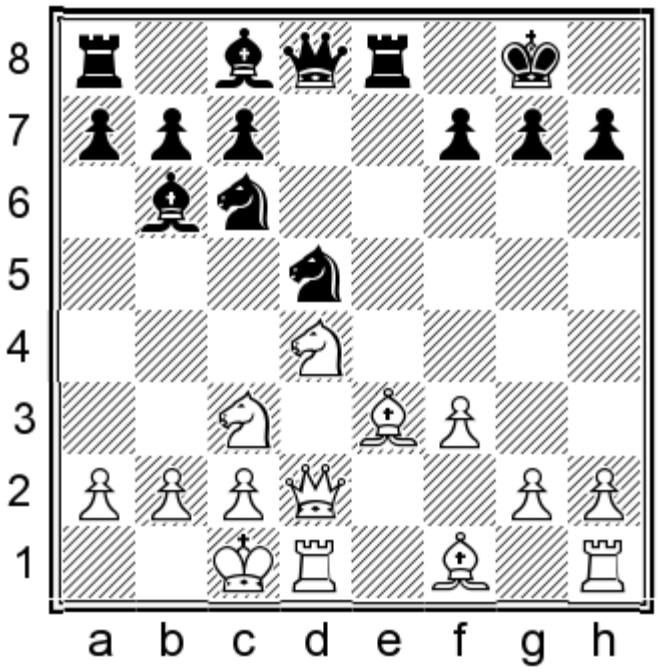
9.f3 d5!?

From here on the game becomes forced. If Black chooses a slow move, such as 9...d6 then after 10.g4 White is doing better.

10.exd5

10.♘xc6?! clearly wouldn't give White any advantage 10...bxc6 11.g4 ♗e6 Black finished his development and got active in the center — everything looks very nice for him!

10...♘xd5



11.♗g5!

A very strong move by White! Probably the only chance to fight for the advantage.

11...♘xc3!?

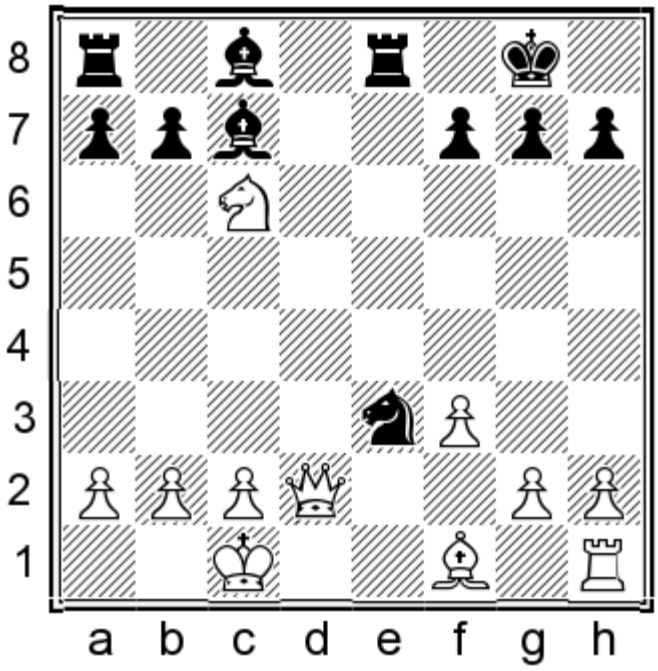
An extremely interesting move by Aronian, which leads to a very crazy position! Leading to a worse endgame was 11...f6 12.♗c4 here a lot of pieces are hanging in the center, and all the coming moves seem quite forced 12...♘xd4

13.♘xd5 ♗e6 14.♗xf6! A very nice tactical blow! 14...gxf6 15.♘xb6 axb6 16.♕xd4 ♕xd4 17.♗xe6+ ♖xe6 18.♖xd4 ♖xa2 19.♔b1 and we are in an endgame where White is clearly a bit better due to the pawn structure.

12.♗xd8 ♘xd1 13.♗xc7!

Kramnik is showing, once again, his great calculation skills in a position that's not easy at all! 13.♗h4 ♘xd4 14.♔xd1 and we are in a position where Black has at least 3 moves that make the evaluation completely unclear: 14...♗f5, 14...♗e6 or 14...♘f5. Yes, White is a queen up, but all the Black pieces are standing in great positions, clearly giving him good counterplay. For the computer fans it is important to know that almost all engines evaluate the advantage of the queen as "too strong".

13...♗xc7 14.♘xc6 ♘e3



15.♗b5!

A very important, and very strong, move by White! It is very difficult to calculate all the lines here. A mistake would be 15.♘d4? ♗f4! 16.♗b5 ♘f1! and White is losing his queen!

15...bxc6!?

15...♗f5!? This is the first choice of the engines, but it's almost impossible to make this move during a practical game. 16.♘d4 ♗f4 and again we are facing a long, forced line. 17.♗xe8 ♘xg2 18.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 19.♘xf5 ♗xd2+ 20.♔xd2 ♖d8+ Probably Black has good chances to save this endgame. A very interesting human move would be 15...a6 16.♗a4 ♘c4 but it seems not to work because of 17.♕b4! b5 18.♗b3 and it looks like White's material advantage is too big.

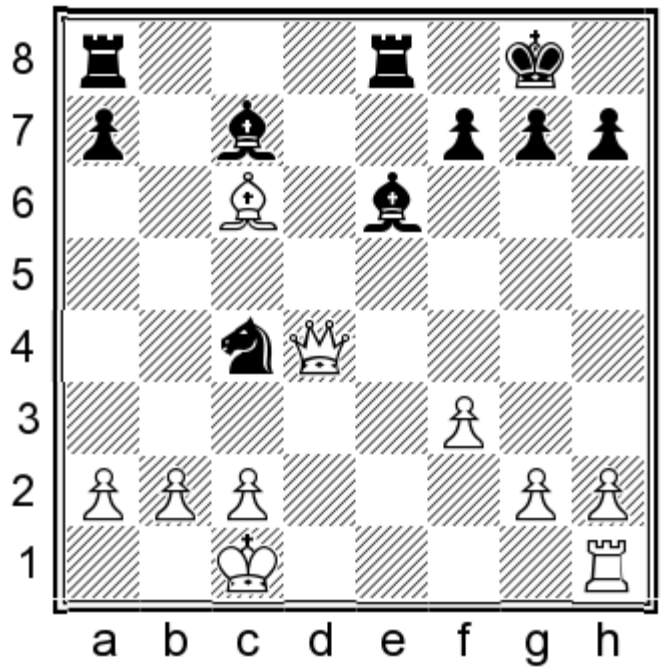
16.♗xc6 ♘c4

Not working is 16...♗f4 although White needs to make 3 amazingly cool moves. 17.♔b1! ♗f5 18.♗xa8! ♖xa8 19.♖e1! White is winning, but this sequence is far from obvious!

17.♕d4

Other queen moves were also possible, but probably the move in the game is the best one — Why? Hmmm, probably it's just a feeling :)

17...♗e6!



Good and logical

18.♗xa8

18.♗xe8?? ♗e5! and the White queen doesn't have any good squares. 19.♕h4 ♗xb2+ 20.♔d1 ♖xe8 with a mating attack!

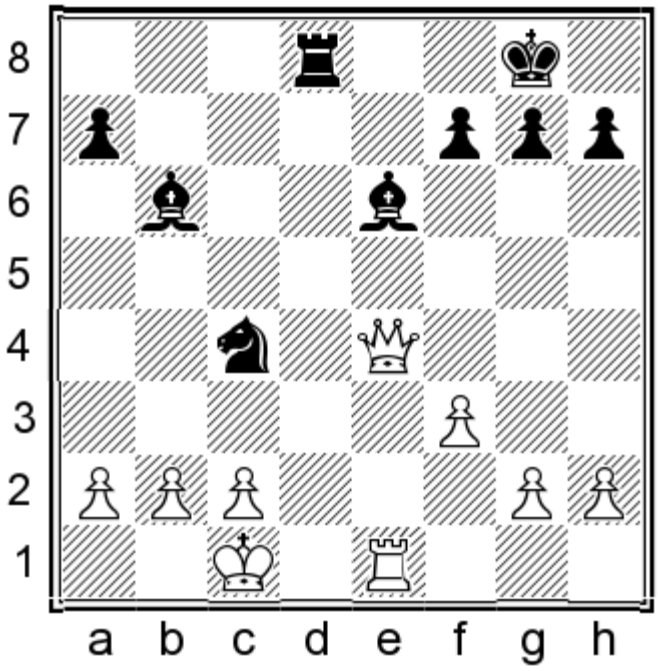
18...♗b6

18...♗e5 19.♕xa7!

19.♕d3

If White tries to hold the piece on a8, he could end up creating ugly complications for himself. 19.♕e4 ♗e3+ 20.♔d1 ♘xb2+ (A bit too optimistic would be *20...♖d8+ 21.♔e1 ♗b6* The position looks super-dangerous for White, but the computer finds great defensive resources. *22.♗b7!* An amazing move that's hard to find in a practical game. *22...♘e3 23.♗a6!* and probably White is doing better.) 21.♔e1 ♗d7 If somebody is better here, most likely it's Black!

19...♖xa8 20.♖e1 ♖d8 21.♕e4



Somehow, the position seems to have stabilized. Black has 3 pieces for a queen and 2 pawns. All of Black pieces are standing very active, giving a lot of chances for tactical ideas. How to evaluate such a position? It's very hard to say. I would say about equal, maybe just a little bit better for White.

21...g5?

In my opinion, a terrible mistake by Black. He's weakening the king for no reason, and the g-pawn would stand much better on g6! I think 21...g6 would be the right move here! And it's hard to say what's going to be White's next move. In case of: 22.b3 ♗c5 23.bxc4 ♗a3+ 24.♔b1 ♖b8+ the position is drawn.

22.c3!

White keeps on playing great chess! 22.c3 A very important, multi-functional move. The White king gets an escape square on c2, and the b3 move becomes a potential threat from now on.

22...♗c5

Reacting against the b3 move.

23.♖e2

White keeps on improving his position.

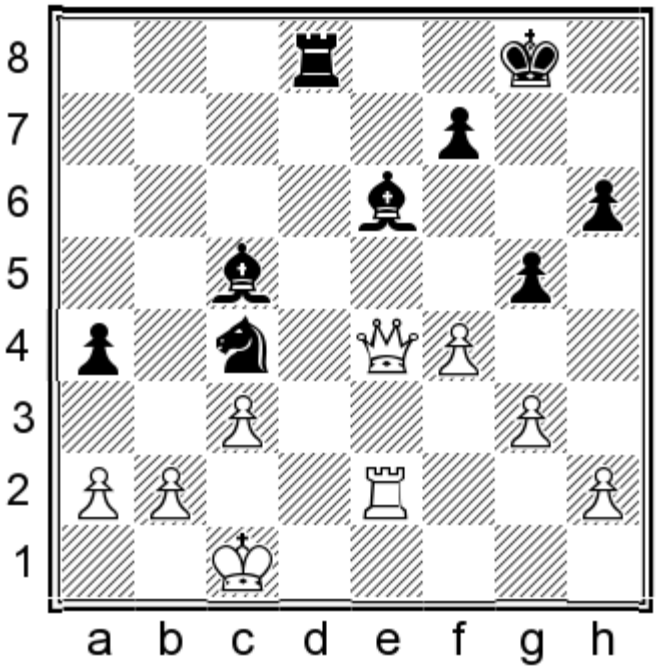
23...h6 24.g3

24.h4 was another way to weaken the pawn structure around the Black king.

24...a5

Black has nothing to improve anymore, the a-pawn is the "last hero".

25.f4 a4



26.f5!

Another important moment, which White solves in a great way.

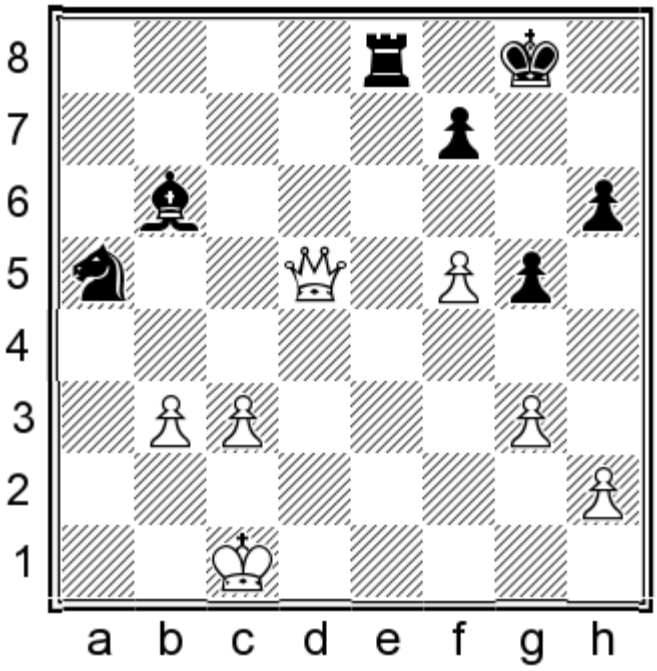
26...♗d5 27.♕d3 ♗b6 28.b3!

Finally the pawns are starting to move.

28...axb3 29.axb3 ♘a5 30.♖e8+!

White continues with his great play. The computer move: 30.♕b5 ♘xb3+ 31.♔b2 ♘a5 leads to a very strange position. 32.♖e8+ ♖xe8 33.♕xe8+ ♔h7 34.♕d7 ♗b3 35.♕b5 and the computer gives White a clear win, but don't ask me why! This is very strange, it's a very funny thing. Imagine the position: Black gives up his knight for the pawn on c3. Is the position winning for White?! Let's see, Black has: ♔g7, ♗f6 and ♗e4. White has: Queen, King, and pawns. Can White win this? Doesn't seem likely!

30...♖xe8 31.♕xd5



Now Black has only one chance to make a draw: to give up a piece for 2 pawns. Is it possible to do this?! Let's see the game.

31...♖d8 32.♕b5 ♖d6

Black is getting the rook to the 6th rank, more precisely to f6, where it will be protected by the King on g7. At the same time, he will try to give one of his pieces for the 2 pawns, precisely on this 6th rank.

33.♔c2 ♔g7 34.b4 ♘b7 35.c4 ♖f6 36.g4!

White has no reason to hurry and to risk giving away the f5 pawn. A big mistake would be 36.c5? ♗xc5 37.bxc5 ♖xf5! 38.♕xb7 ♖xc5+ when the Black rook is going to e6, and the position becomes a theoretical draw!

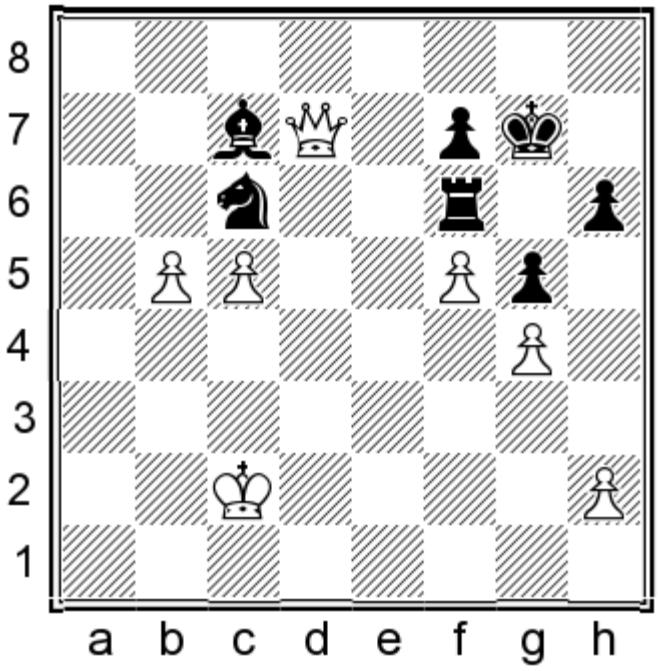
36...♘d8

Black is trying to fight, but the position is hopeless. He can't co-ordinate his pieces correctly.

37.c5 ♗c7

The last chance to fight would have been 37...♘c6! 38.♕a4 ♗c7 39.b5 but it seems that here also White will probably win the game.

38.♕d7 ♘c6 39.b5!



The last precise move!

39...♘a7 40.♕xc7 ♘xb5 41.♕e5 ♘a7 42.♔d3

The White king is going to g3, then White will play h4, hxg, hxg, and ♕e3. Black is totally paralyzed against this plan. A very interesting game and a well-deserved winner!

1–0

GAME 2
E. Bacrot (2713)
A. Morozevich (2770)
Biel
24.07.2012, [D31]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

A very complex game awaits! Morozevich introduced a novelty in a very sharp line, which seems to lead to a fine position for Black. Due to his opponent's time-trouble, he was over-pressing and instead of landing a perpetual check, he allowed Bacrot to finish the game with a fantastic combination.

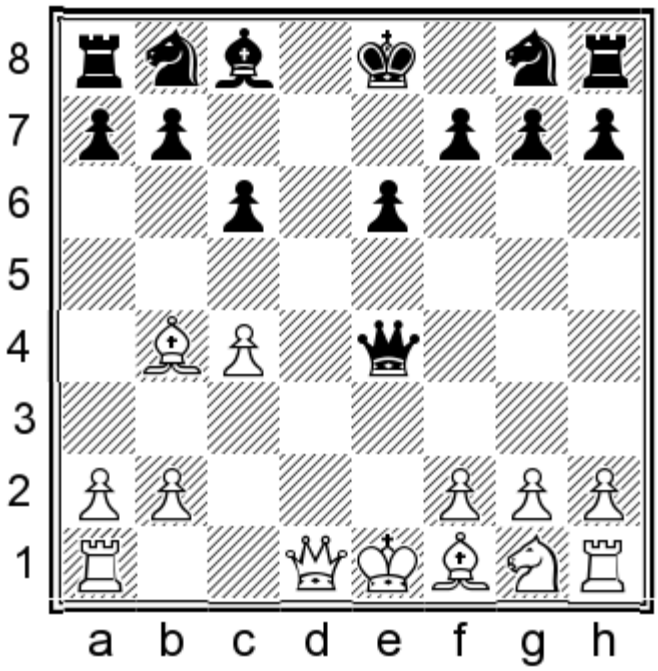
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6

A complex set-up, which might transpose to many openings. Black can usually decide between playing a Stonewall structure with f5, or to transpose to the Meran with ♘f6...

4.e4!?

This is the only way for White to avoid the transpositions to the main lines, but here White has to sacrifice a pawn and agree to play for compensation. Otherwise, White should play 4.e3.

4...dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♗b4+ 6.♗d2 ♕xd4 7.♗xb4 ♕xe4+



This is the starting position of the Marshall Gambit, who played this opening for the first time in 1902! White sacrifices a pawn for the bishop pair and the Black king usually has serious difficulties to find safety, mainly because of the strong dark-squared bishop. Of course, such positions are ideal for modern ‘computer’ chess. We have seen many great novelties for both sides recently. The materialistic machines stubbornly help Black to hold his advantage...

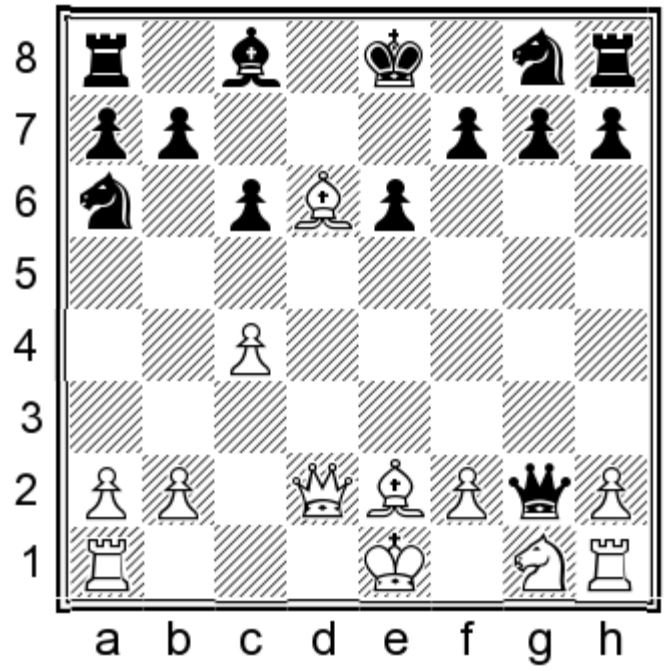
8.♗e2

8.♘e2 was considered to be less dangerous, but after Ian Nepomniachtchi beat the specialist of this opening, Dusko Pavasovic, this move had to be taken seriously as well. The idea is 8...♘a6 9.♗f8! A really nice move, but this is just the beginning of the whole story...

8...♘a6 9.♗d6

Bacrot goes for the second most popular continuation. The mainline is 9.♗a5 ; 9.♗f8?! is still nice, but less effective here, because of 9...♕xg2 10.♕d6 with the idea of a quick 0-0-0. Black can calmly play 10...♗d7 11.0-0-0 0-0-0 and he is better.

9...♕xg2 10.♕d2!



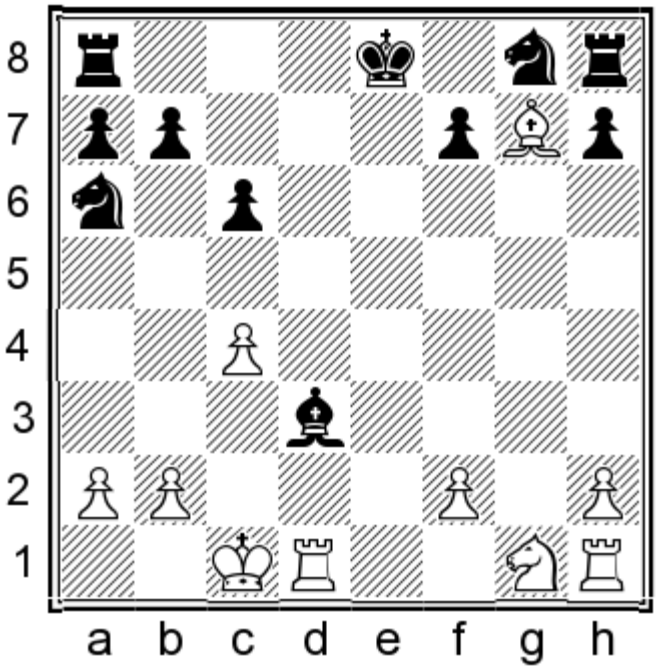
10.♗f3 ♕g5 followed by ♘e7, is known as good for Black.

10...e5!?

This is practically a novelty, but of course one of the computer's main offers of advice! Black frees the way for his bishop in order to develop it quickly and play 0-0-0. However, there have been almost a hundred games with 10...♘f6 11.♗f3 ♕g6 and Black's results are really good with it. It's rather White who usually avoids this line. I, unsuccessfully, tried to refute this line over many pages, but the computer holds for Black. The maximum that I could reach was a draw. It would be interesting to know what Morozevich and Bacrot knew here..? In my opinion, Morozevich just wanted to try another move (with 10...e5), because it seems playable. The bigger question is why Bacrot went for this line, especially when he spent 40 minutes on ♕d2?! 10...♕xh1? would be too greedy. 11.0-0-0! ♗f3 threatens to trap the queen, and after 11...♕e4 12.♗e7! wins.

11.♗xe5

11.0-0-0 is an interesting alternative, to which Black must react precisely with 11...♕e4! with two ideas. The main is to exchange the queens with ...♕f4, the other to develop ...♗f5 with tempo. 12.♗xe5 The following moves are forced. (*12.♕g5 ♕f4+*) 12...♗f5! 13.♗d3! ♕xd3 14.♕xd3 ♗xd3 15.♗xg7



15...♘b4! The critical position of this line. White seems to be better as he will be an exchange up after taking on h8, and the Black knight is intending to jump to a2, from where it is questionable if it will emerge again. Despite all these facts, concrete variations show that Black is OK! (*15...♗xc4 16.♗xh8 ♗xa2 17.♘f3* is probably slightly better for White.) 16.b3

a) 16.a3 ♘a2+! 17.♔d2 0-0-0 Just in time! This solves all of Black problems. 18.♘f3 Otherwise ♗e4. 18...♗xc4+ 19.♔c2 ♘h6! 20.♗xh8 (*20.♗xh6* does not work, because of *20...♖xd1 21.♖xd1 ♗e2!*; *20.♘e5* with the idea of taking on h6, but mainly, it avoids the ♗e2 threat. *20...♗e6 21.♗xh6 f6!* and the knight has no good square to retreat, since ♘d3 is met with ♗f5, while *22.♘f3 ♖xd1 23.♖xd1 ♗g4) 20...♖xh8 21.♖he1 ♗d5* White will only be able to win the knight if he sacrifices the exchange on d5, but of course, then he can't dream about an advantage.;

b) White should not hurry with 16.♗xh8 ♘xa2+ 17.♔d2 ♗xc4 getting two pawns for the exchange, and only Black can be better. The knight will be rescued via b4 later.;

16...♗e4 17.f3 ♗f5 is the easiest.

(*17...♘d3+* is also possible. *18.♔d2 ♘f2 19.♖f1 ♘xh1 20.fxe4 0-0-0+ 21.♔e3 ♘e7 22.♗xh8 ♖xh8 23.♘e2* and the game should end in a draw.)

18.♗xh8 ♘d3+ 19.♖xd3 ♗xd3= with an even position.

11...♗f5 12.♗f3

12.0-0-0 ♕e4 is a transposition to the 11.0-0-0 line.

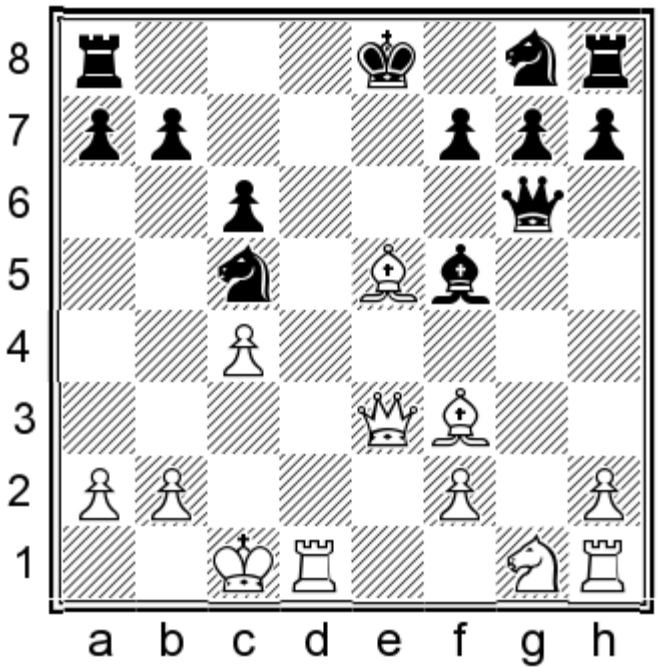
12...♕g6 13.0-0-0

White wanted to avoid ...♖d8, but it walks into some dangerous threats after ♘c5. 13.♘e2 was possible, but it allows 13...♖d8 14.♘f4 (*14.♕e3 ♘e7 15.♘f4 ♕h6* is a transposition.) 14...♕h6 15.♕e3 ♘e7 Black is ready to castle kingside, and White has to force a draw with 16.♘h5! (*16.♖g1* is refuted by *16...♘b4!*) 16...♕xe3+ 17.fxe3 f6 18.♘xg7+ ♔f7 19.♘xf5 ♘xf5 20.♗f4 ♘c5= After a couple of only moves from both sides, a drawn position has arisen.

13...♘c5!

Black must continue to play concretely! ...♘d3 is the threat. Calm developing moves like 13...♘e7? offer enough time for White to build up an attack. 14.♘e2! f6 15.♗d6 0-0-0 16.♕f4± White is doing great here and concrete moves don't save Black anymore. 16...♗b1 17.♖d2 ♗xa2 ♕b1 is the threat, but 18.♘c3!+–

14.♕e3

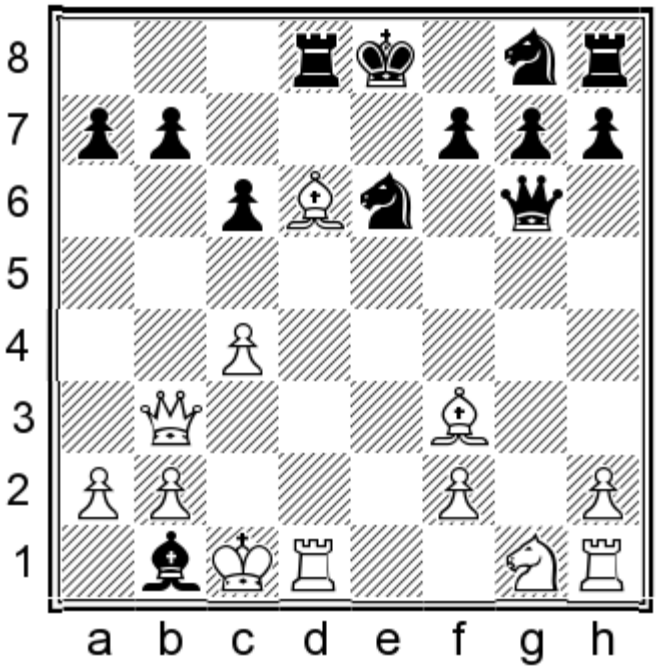


14...♗b1!

A really spectacular move, creating the threat of ♕c2! Of course, now 14...♘d3+? doesn't work: 15.♖xd3 ♗xd3 16.♗xg7++–

15.♖d2

15.♗d6+!? ♘e6 16.♕b3! was a very tricky alternative, because the most logical move for Black is a mistake. It's really hard to play the position correctly with both sides. Training to calculate such positions are very useful to improve our skills. 16...♖d8!



(I think most of us would be happy to finally depart with the king from the center, but White can get an advantage here after a couple of very strong moves. 16...0-0-0 17.♗xc6!

(*17.♘e2* seems to win, because of the simple threat of ♖hg1, but *17...♗xa2!* An unexpected blow! *18.♕xa2* ♕*g5+* and Black wins the f3 bishop with ♕f5 check.)

17...♘c5!

(*17...bxc6 18.♕b8+* ♔*d7 19.♗c7++–*)

18.♗xc5 ♖xd1+ 19.♕xd1! It's very important to have the ♕g4 resource. 19...♕xc6

(*19...bxc6 20.♘f3*±)

20.♕g4+! f5 21.♕xg7 and White has the same points on both lines. 21...♕e4!? This in-between move doesn't help.

(*21...♕xh1 22.f3!*± protecting the knight on g1, to be able to take the rook.)

22.♕c3 ♕xh1 23.f3! White is a rook down at the moment, but he is doing better.)

17.♘h3!?

(17.♘e2 moves into the same trick. 17...♗xa2! but here White has an extra option: 18.♗xc6+!

(*18.♕xa2* ♕*g5+* and ♕f5 next.; *18.♕xb7* loses to *18...♕b1+ 19.*♔*d2* ♖*xd6+ 20.*♔*c3* ♖*xd1*)

18...bxc6 19.♕xa2 and, for example, after 19...♘e7 20.♗xe7 ♔xe7 21.♕xa7+ ♔f6 the position is about even. Both kings are equally safe now.)

17...♘f6!

(The difference is that after 17...♗xa2 White has 18.♕xb7!!

(*18.♕xa2* ♕*h6+* would be fine for Black.)

18...♕b1+ 19.♔d2 ♖xd6+ 20.♔c3! and the d1 k is protected in comparison to the position where the knight is on e2. 20...♕f5 21.♕b8+! ♖d8 22.♖xd8+ ♘xd8 23.♖e1+ ♘e7 24.♗xc6+!+– "Doublepin", and mate to follow.)

18.♗a3 An interesting situation. The computer evaluates the first 4 moves as 0.00, but for human eyes, one mistake could decide the game...

(*18.♖he1* ♖*xd6! 19.♖xd6 0-0* Suddenly, the White king has become really weak.)

18...c5 seems to be the most logical to me, closing down the bishop on a3. 19.♖xd8+ ♔xd8 20.♖d1+ ♘d7! White can force a draw by 21.♘f4

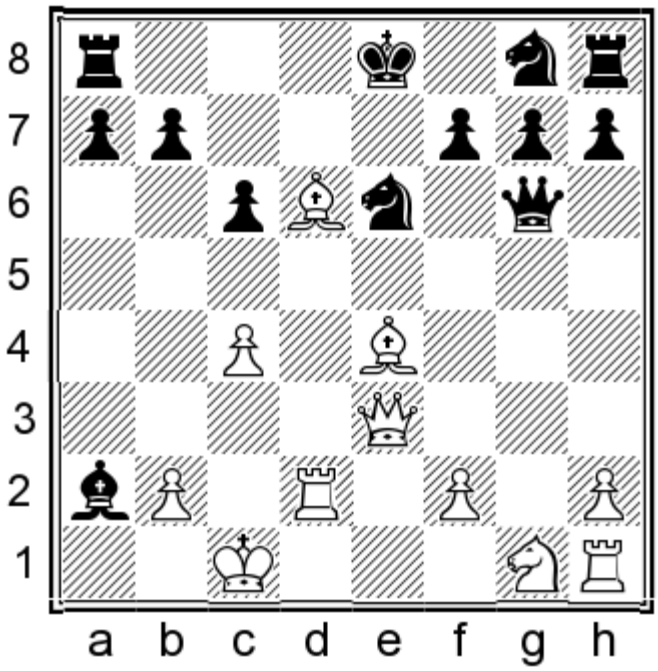
(*21.♖d2* leads to draw as well. *21...b6 22.♕a4 ♘d4 23.♕xa7 ♖e8* White seems to be in trouble, but he can survive with *24.♕a8+! ♔e7 25.♕d5!* with the threat of ♕xd4! *25...♘xf3 26.♘f4! ♕f5 27.♕d6+ ♔d8 28.♕b8+ ♔e7 29.♕d6+=*)

21...♘xf4 22.♖xd7+! ♔xd7 23.♕xb7+ with perpetual check. Even after the brave attempt, White holds the draw 23...♔e6 24.♕c6+ ♔f5 25.♕xc5+ ♔f6 26.♕e7+ ♔f5 27.♕c5+=

15...♗xa2!

Black creates the double-threat of ♕b1 and ♘b3. So, White has to play:

16.♗d6+ ♘e6 17.♗e4



17...♕h6

Both sides have parried the concrete threats. Black is a pawn up, but his king is still in the center and 0-0-0 is always met with ♕xa7.

18.f4

Of course, White cannot exchange queens.

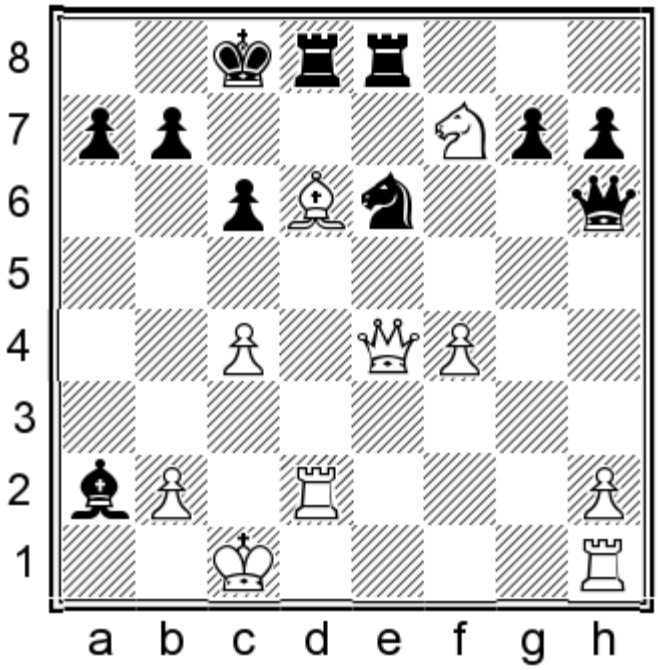
18...♘f6 19.♘f3!

Strong play by Bacrot, even though he had only a few minutes on the clock. He calmly starts to develop his pieces and intends to play ♖e1 and f5. The bishop could not be trapped with 19.b3? because of 19...♘xe4 20.♕xe4 ♗xb3

19...♗xc4

19...♘xe4 leads to a perpetual check as well, if both players find the best moves. 20.♕xe4 0-0-0 21.♘e5 with the

threats of ♘xc6 and ♘xf7. 21...♖he8! 22.♘xf7!



(*22.♘xc6* leads to a slightly better endgame for Black after the forced line *22...♖xd6! 23.♖xd6 ♕xf4+ 24.♕xf4 ♘xf4 25.♘xa7+ ♔b8 26.♘b5 ♗xc4*↑ with some advantage.)

22...♘d4! Another spectacular move! 23.♕xd4

(*23.♕xe8?! ♘b3+ 24.♔d1 ♕h5+ 25.♕e2 ♕xf7* Black has a strong attack.)

23...♕g6 refreshing the mate on b1 idea. 24.f5 ♕xf7!

(Black should not be too greedy with *24...♕xf5 25.♖f2! ♕b1+ 26.♔d2 ♖e4! 27.♖xb1 ♖xd4+ 28.♔e3 ♖8xd6 29.♘xd6+ ♖xd6 30.♖f8+ ♔c7 31.♖f7+* and White has some advantage.)

25.♕xa7 ♖xd6! The only move, and the game ends with a perpetual check. 26.♕a8+ (*26.♖xd6? ♕xc4+*) 26...♔c7 27.♕a5+ ♔c8=

20.♖e1

White wants to win a piece with f5. Here both players had just a few minutes left, which increases the tension to the maximum.

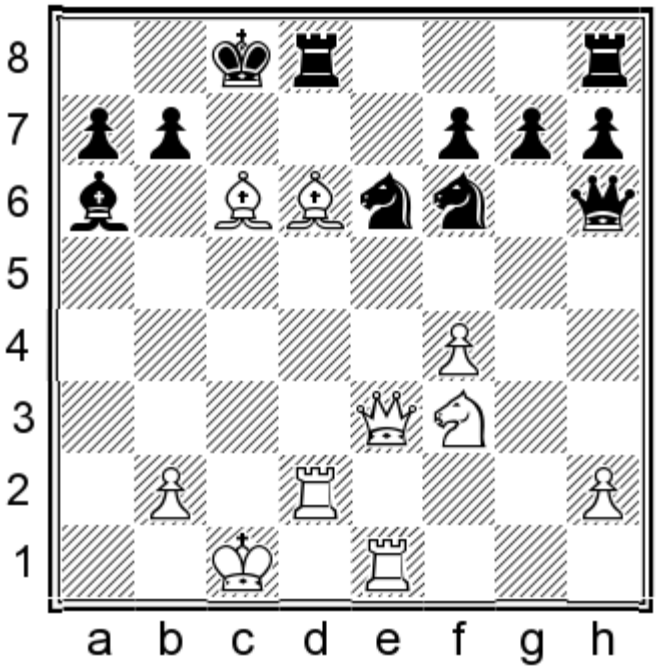
20...0-0-0!

20...♘d5? loses to 21.♗xd5 ♗xd5 22.♖xd5! cxd5 23.♕c5! and the Black pieces are unable to defend the king. For example 23...♖d8 24.♕b5+ ♖d7 25.♘e5 ♕xf4+ 26.♔b1+–

21.♗xc6!

Excellent calculation and nerves! Now the game should end in a perpetual check again, but Morozevich became over-optimistic... On 21.♕xa7? Black has 21...♖xd6! followed by ♕xf4.

21...♗a6?



21...bxc6! 22.♕xa7 ♖xd6! 23.♕a8+ and draw. The player who tries to avoid that, loses... (*23.♖xd6? ♕xf4+*) 23...♔c7 (*23...♔d7? 24.♕b7+ ♔e8 25.♕b8+*) 24.♕a7+ ♔c8

22.♘g5!

This extremely strong move was missed by Morozevich! White is attacking on the queenside and suddenly he makes a move on the other flank. The point is to avoid the usual ...♖xd6 and ...♕xf4 check ideas! White is winning now. 22.♕xa7? ♖xd6 23.♖xd6 ♕xf4+ was again in Black's mind!

22...♘xg5

The final mistake, but it was over anyway. Now there are many different way to win the game, but Bacrot played the most spectacular one!

23.♗d7+!

And mate to follow in all lines.

23...♔xd7

23...♖xd7 24.♕c5+ ♔d8 25.♗e7+ ♔e8 26.♕c8++–;

23...♘xd7 24.♕c3++–

24.♕e7+ ♔c6 25.♕c7+

25.♕c7+ ♔b5 26.♕c5+ ♔a4 27.♕b4# An extremely hard fight with a lot of tension!

1–0

GAME 3
L. Aronian (2816)

V. Ivanchuk (2769)
40th Olympiad Open
Istanbul TUR
01.09.2012, [E15]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

We are now facing the decisive encounter between two potential medallists, Armenia and Ukraine.

1.♘f3

The big advantage of the 1.d4 players is that they can confuse their opponent's preparation by starting with 1.c4 or 1.♘f3. A lot of times these first moves lead to the same positions, just with a different move order. With 1.e4 there are no such transpositions.

1...♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.d4 b6

We have ended up in the Queen's Indian Defense and Aronian played his favorite:

4.g3 ♗a6 5.b3 ♗b4+ 6.♗d2 ♗e7

Ivanchuk goes for the old main-line. Black has lured the bishop to d2, which is not a great place. It should normally develop to the long diagonal, but now the move ♗c3 would occupy the b1-knight's ideal square. 6...♗xd2+ 7.♕xd2 c6 is a modern approach for Black. We analyzed the game Aronian-Grischuk, Moscow 2012, in the CEWN Nr. 17.

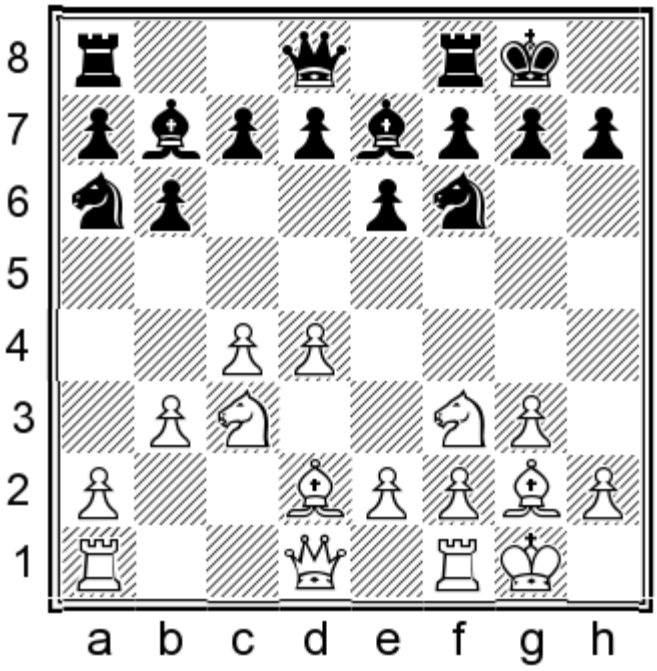
7.♘c3

The critical line, and it's still not clear how to play with Black to equalize..? He has a wide range of setups, but the solution is not obvious yet. The most common move 7.♗g2 is considered to be harmless nowadays after some very long theoretical lines starting with 7...c6.

7...♗b7

Black stops the e4 plan, which was the main idea of the previous move. 7...c6; 7...d5 and 7...0-0 are all also possible.

8.♗g2 0-0 9.0-0 ♘a6



9...d5 is probably a better way to start, or at least, it avoids the game continuation. 10.cxd5 exd5 This is an important theoretical position with hundreds of games. Personally, I slightly prefer White's position... 11.♕c2 (*11.♗c1* transferring the bishop to b2 is another plan.) 11...♘a6 12.♖fd1 followed by ♗f4 and ♘e5 is the main line.

10.d5!?

This is a well-known idea in the g3 system of the Queen's Indian, however in this particular position, I found only one good game in the database. White wants to occupy the center with e4, so Black is forced to accept the challenge.

10...exd5 11.♘d4

Usually the d5-break comes after Black's ...c5 move, and ♘h4 is the usual way to recover the pawn. With the pawn on c7, Black can keep his pawn, at least for a while. Actually, he's forced to fight for it, since if White simply takes back on d5 and plays e4, he achieves the maximum from the opening.

11...♗c5

11...c6 occurred in the earlier game, but White gets an advantage after 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 cxd5 Black is temporarily a pawn up, but it cannot be long-lasting. 14.♘f5! The idea is ♗f4 and ♘e3. After the d5 pawn falls, White obtains a better pawn-structure because of the d7 isolated pawn. 14...♖e8 15.♗f4 ♗f8 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♕xd5 ♕f6 (*17...♖xe2?* did not work, because of *18.♕c4* with a double-attack.) 18.♘e3 White was better in Kanstler-Psakhis, Israel 1999. The knight was heading to d5.

12.♘c2

As we have seen in the previous line, to win back the d5 pawn White needs to take his knight to e3. 12.♗f4 was also possible. 12...c6 (White recovers the pawn after *12...♘e4 13.♘xd5!* looks like a blunder, but... *13...♗xd5 14.cxd5 ♘c3 15.♕d3 ♗xd4* does not win the piece, because of *16.♕xa6*) 13.cxd5 ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 cxd5 15.♘f5 followed by ♘e3 with the usual small advantage.

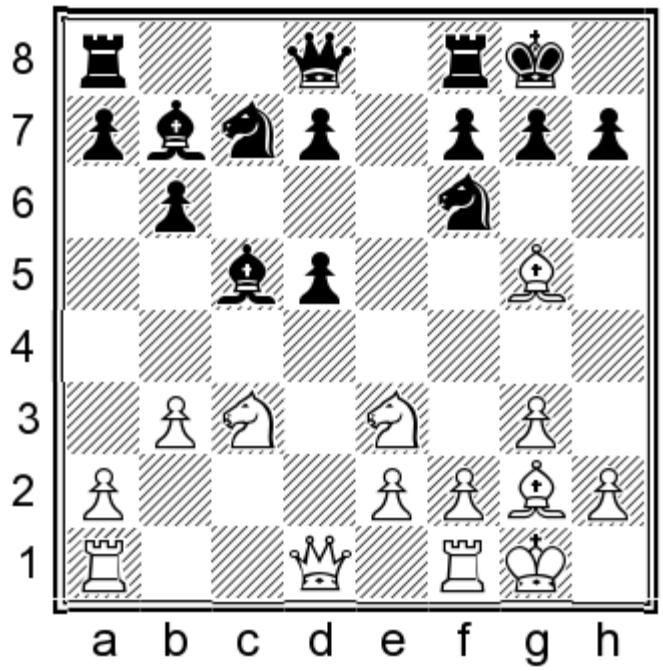
12...c6 13.cxd5 cxd5

Actually, it seems to be a slightly dubious decision to allow White his next move... 13...♘xd5 was more logical. 14.♘xd5 cxd5 15.♗f4 ♘c7 16.♘e3 ♖c8 (It's not advisable to keep the extra pawn with *16...♗xe3 17.♗xe3* and Black must suffer with his passive pieces. White simply develops with ♕d2, ♖ac1 and ♖fd1 with unpleasant pressure.) 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.♗xd5 ♗c6 with a small but stable advantage for White.

14.♗g5!

Suddenly this pin becomes very annoying. That's why it would have been better to get rid of a pair of knights.

14...♘c7 15.♘e3



Black is facing a difficult choice now, but he can still fight for equality...

15...d4?

Probably Ivanchuk pinned his hopes to this move when he took on d5 with the pawn, but he blundered one of the following moves... 15...h6 leads to a worse position after 16.♗xf6 ♕xf6 17.♘cxd5 ♘xd5 18.♘xd5 ♕e5 19.♘f6+! ♕xf6 20.♗xb7 ♖ab8 21.♗g2. This opposite-colored bishop position is unpleasant for Black, as he lacks an active plan. White plays e3 and ♕e2 followed by doubling the rooks on the d-file. This 'illogical' next move, giving up the bishop, was the best chance. 15...♗xe3! Ivanchuk was probably afraid of 16.fxe3

(*16.♗xe3!? ♘e4 17.♖c1* gives decent compensation for White, but he must still fight for the advantage.)

16...♕e8! This is the key resource in Black's defense.

(*16...♘ce8 17.♗xd5!* is good for White.)

17.♗xf6 ♕xe3+ 18.♖f2 gxf6 Black has some really ugly pawns, but at the moment he's two of them up! 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.♗xd5 ♗xd5 21.♕xd5 After the simplifications, Black has good chances to hold...

16.♗xb7 ♖b8

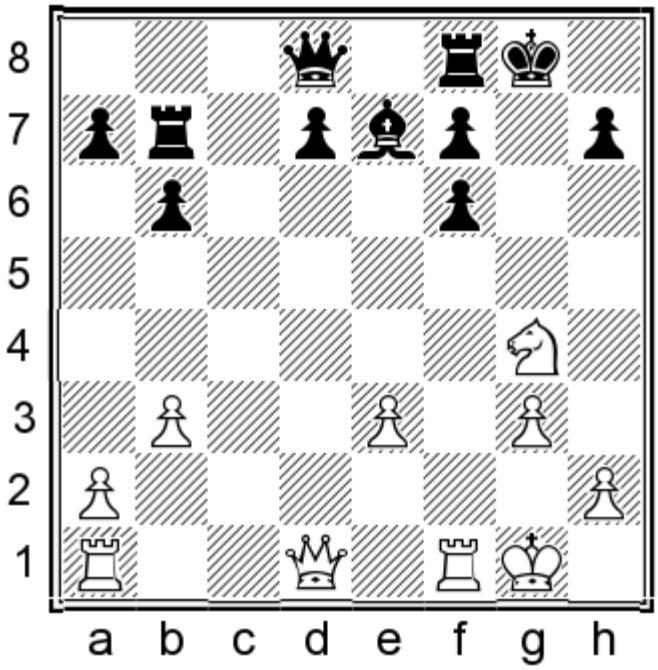
Black wins back the piece, but his kingside pawn structure gets destroyed...

16...dxe3 17.fxe3! (Not *17.♗xa8? exf2+ 18.♔g2 ♕xa8+* Black is better.) 17...♖b8 18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♗e4 The exposed

Black king becomes vulnerable. A simple but strong idea is ♗c2 followed by ♕d3! 19...♗xe3+ 20.♔h1±

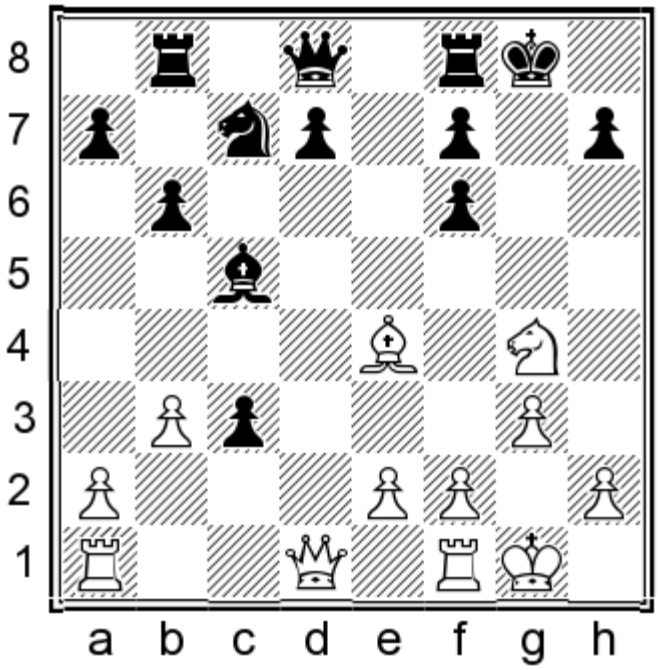
17.♘g4! dxc3

17...♖xb7 is also bad. 18.♘e4 ♘cd5 19.♘exf6+ ♘xf6 20.♗xf6! The knight causes much bigger problems to the holes around the king. 20...gxf6 21.e3! The most precise way to increase the attack. 21...dxe3 22.fxe3 ♗e7



Here comes a really spectacular way to win 23.♘h6+ ♔h8 24.♘xf7+!! ♖xf7 and now 25.♕d5! wins an exchange with this unexpected double attack.

18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♗e4!



White is a pawn down, but the exposed Black king gives more than enough compensation for the pawn.

19...d5

19...♖e8 is met by 20.♗f5 when Black cannot prevent ♕c1, which threatens with ♕h6 and ♕xc3 at the same time. 20...h5 doesn't change anything. 21.♕c1! ♗f8 (*21...hxg4 22.♕h6+–* wins.) 22.♘h6+ ♔g7 23.♗b1!+– This is the most precise, creating the decisive threat of ♕c2-h7.

20.♗c2

♕d3 is the threat. Black is forced to give back his pawn in order to gain some time to defend his king.

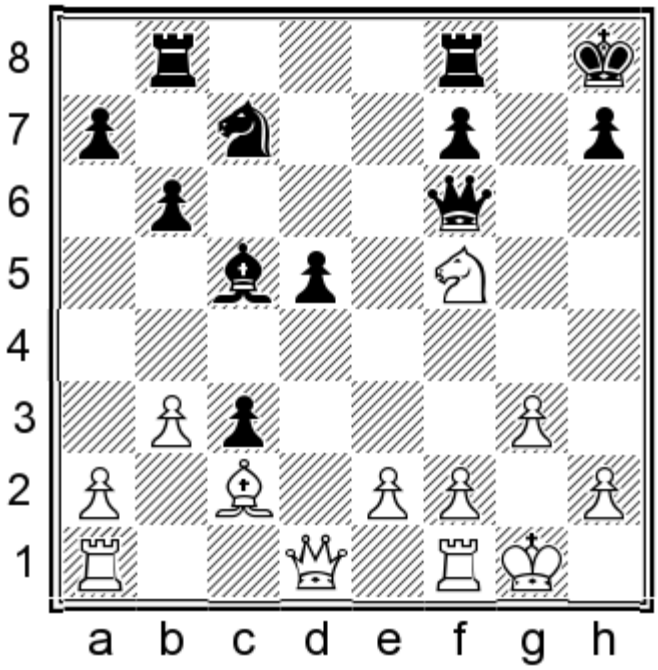
20...f5!

Only move.

21.♘h6+!

White retains the idea of ♕d3 by taking the f5-pawn with the knight. 21.♗xf5 ♕g5

21...♔h8 22.♘xf5 ♕f6



23.a3!!

Just a fantastic move, opening a new front to the battle! White wants to send the only active Black piece into passivity by b4. 23.♕d3 ♖g8 24.a3 is the same.

23...a5

The most logical move, but it supports White's idea. 23...♖g8 is also quite hopeless. 24.b4 ♗f8 25.♕d3 The days of the c3 pawn are counted. 25...♖g6 Now the easiest is probably 26.e3 ♖d8 27.♘d4± winning the pawn and keeping all the advantages of the position as well.

24.♕d3 ♖g8 25.b4!

Aronian found the fastest way to bring his rook into the attack with this great pawn sacrifice.

25...axb4

25...♗f8 26.♘d4+– wins the c3 pawn.

26.axb4 ♗xb4 27.♖a7!

The game is practically over. Black cannot withstand the attack.

27...♘e6

27...♖bc8 also loses to 28.♘e7!+–

28.♘e7!

White wins material now!

28...♕g7

28...♖g7 loses even bigger material after 29.♘xd5 ♕d4 30.♕xd4 ♘xd4 31.♘xb4+– protecting the c2 bishop.

29.♘xg8 ♔xg8 30.♕xd5

Black could have calmly resigned here. Besides being an exchange up, White retains his attacking chances. The c- and b-pawns are perfectly neutralized by the bishop.

30...♗c5 31.e3

Not giving any opportunities for counterplay.

31...b5

31...♖d8 32.♖a8+–

32.♖a8 ♖xa8 33.♕xa8+ ♕f8 34.♕e4!

Of course, White has no reason to exchange the queens, since he can continue his very dangerous mating attack.

34...♕h6 35.♖a1 b4 36.♖a5

36.♖a8+ was even more precise. 36...♘f8 (*36...♗f8 37.♕xb4+–; 36...♔g7* loses the queen after *37.♕e5+ ♕f6 38.♖g8+!*) 37.♖c8 ♗d6 38.♖c6+– wins the bishop soon.

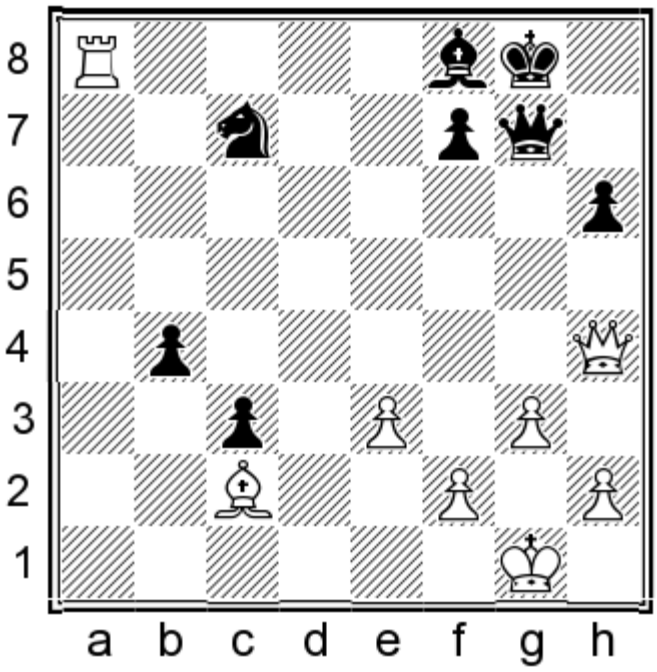
36...♗f8 37.♕g4+ ♕g7

37...♔h8 38.♖h5+– was the idea of 36.♖a5.

38.♕h4 h6 39.♖a8!

Black cannot protect his hanging b4-pawn.

39...♘c7



This allows an elegant little combination to finish the game.

40.♖xf8+!

White wins the knight in all lines. 40.♖c8+−

40...♕xf8

40...♔xf8 is refuted by 41.♕xb4+ ♔e8 (*41...♔g8 42.♕b8++–*) 42.♗a4+ ♔d8 43.♕b8++–

41.♕g4+ ♔h8

41...♕g7 42.♕c8++–

42.♕f5!

Ivanchuk resigned after this great quiet move, in view of the following lines: 42.♕f5 ♕g7 (*42...♕g8 43.♕e5+*; *42...♔g7 43.♕e5+*) 43.♕c8+ With this nice victory by Aronian, Armenia won the match 2.5–1.5, thereby taking a big step towards the medals.

1–0

GAME 4
S. Mamedyarov (2729)
A. Brkic (2587)
40th Olympiad Open
Istanbul TUR (6.2)
03.09.2012, [D45]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

Now for a great attacking game by Mamedyarov, who made the highest performance of the entire Olympiad. He scored

8.5 point out of 10 games against a 2585 average rating, which was equal to a 2880 performance.

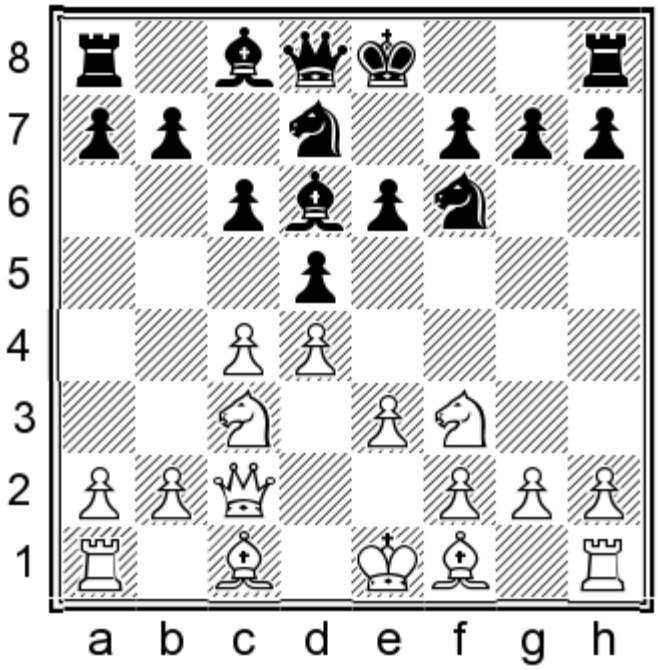
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♘f3 ♘bd7

We are at the starting position of the Meran.

6.♕c2

6.♗d3 is the other main line.

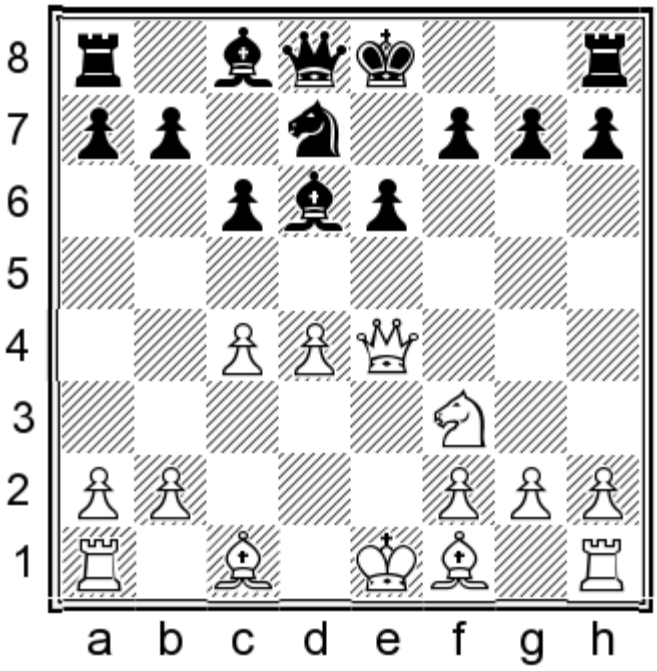
6...♗d6



7.e4!?

This is a tricky side-line. If somebody is not familiar with its subtleties, they could easily end up in a bad position out of the opening.

7...dxe4 8.♘xe4 ♘xe4 9.♕xe4



9...e5!?

Black decided to accept the challenge and went for the most concrete line. He's aiming for a simplification in the center, which would yield a completely drawn position. White must do something extraordinary if he wants something now... 9...c5 is a calmer reaction, which usually continues with 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♗xe7 ♕a5+! 12.♔e2 ♔xe7 13.g3 White intends to castle artificially with ♗g2, ♖hd1 and if necessary ♔f1. 13...♖d8 14.♗g2 cxd4 15.♕xd4 ♘f6 This is just the start of the lines, but it's considered to be equal at the end.

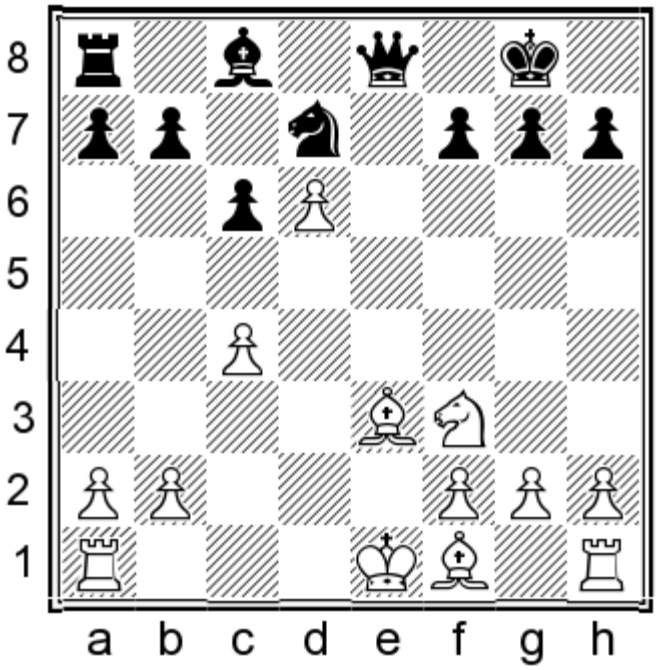
10.dxe5 0-0!

This is the point! Black wants to take twice on e5, followed by ♖e8.

11.exd6!

This queen sacrifice is the only chance to fight for the advantage. 11.♗d3 is met with 11...f5! 12.♕e2 (*12.exf6?? ♖e8*) 12...♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5=. On 11.♗e2 the easiest is 11...♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♕a5+ with equality.

11...♖e8 12.♕xe8+ ♕xe8+ 13.♗e3



Let’s summarize what we see. White has a rook, bishop and pawn for the queen. Additionally, the bishop pair and the dangerous passed pawn on d6 are also important factors. On the other hand, Black can build up an excellent blockading position on d7 and has very good chances to create counterplay on the queenside. It’s very hard to judge who is better objectively. The computer clearly favors Black’s position, but to the human eye things are much more complicated.

13...♘f6 14.♗d3!?

This is a rare, but clever move-order. White wants to castle queenside in any case, but he prevents the bishop’s development to f5 first. 14.0-0-0 ♗f5 is a good alternative for Black, compared to 14...♗e6 which would transpose to the game.

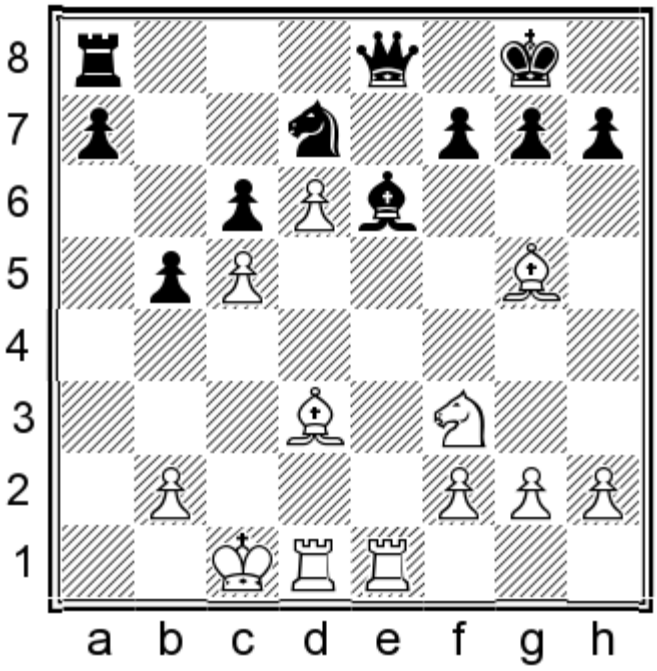
14...♗e6 15.0-0-0 b5

This is a double-edged decision, since it allows White to protect d6 safely, with a pawn being given for another pawn. A much safer choice is 15...c5 16.b3 (*16.♗xc5* is not good because of *16...♕c8* and the exchange of the c-pawns is good for Black.) 16...♕c6 Black can later create his counterplay with ...a6-b5, for example. The position is unclear.

16.c5! ♗xa2

According to the computer, Black’s advantage is close to being decisive, but I think that’s very far from the reality. Actually, it’s clear that both players were following their preparations, since there were still some previous games played according to my database.

17.♗g5 ♘d7 18.♖he1 ♗e6



19.♗e3!

This is the novelty. Quite a logical one too, as White simply protects his c5 pawn, which was not possible with 19.b4 because of a5! In the previous game 19.♘d4 was played, but Black was much better after 19...♘xc5 20.♗f5 ♕d7 in Ivkov-Panchenko, Sochi 1983. Still, it was a nice achievement to reach this position 30 years ago without any computer assistance!

19...h6

Black prevents ♘g5.

20.♗c2

White prepares for the action that we'll see in the game.

20...♕c8!?

Leaving the pin on the e-file. 20...a5!? would have also made sense. The idea is to make use of the pawn majority by advancing with a4-b4-a3. Probably Mamedyarov planned to play in a similar style as in the game. 21.♘d4!? ♘xc5 22.♘xe6 ♘xe6 23.d7 ♕d8 with a very unclear position. White should kick out the blockading e6 knight with f4-f5 in order to penetrate with the rook.(*23...♕e7? 24.♗b6*)

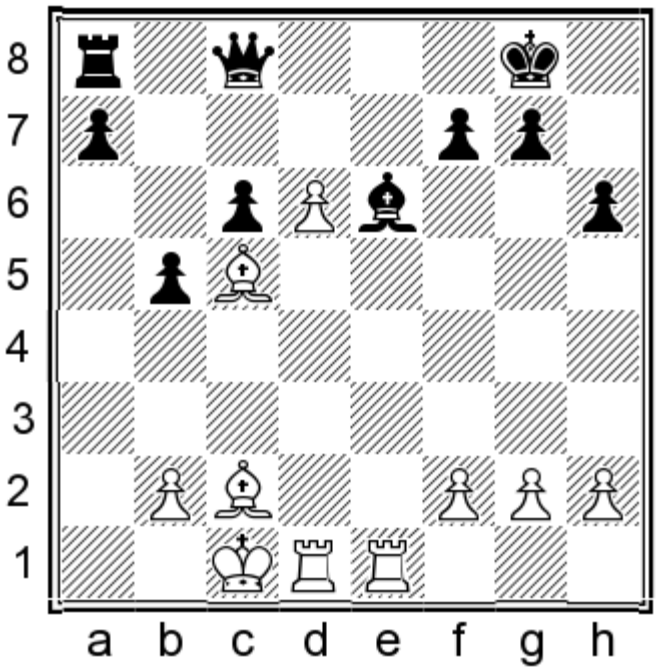
21.♘d4

White tries to mobilize his d6 pawn even if it costs him the one on c5.

21...♘xc5 22.♘f5!?

White wants to exchange the minor pieces, after which the d-pawn would become unstoppable. Black is forced to give up his knight because of the ♘e7 threat, but he can still keep his bishop.

22...♗xf5 23.♗xc5 ♗e6



Mamedyarov now continues the game in brilliant style! 23...♗xc2? loses to 24.d7+–

24.f4!

With the idea of playing f5, followed by ♖e7.

24...g6 25.g4!!

This is a really fantastic move. White had to foresee all the forthcoming complications. Black is forced to accept the sacrifice, otherwise White will play f5.

25...♗xg4 26.♖d4!

The rook occupies the 4th rank, which is key to the game! The threat is ♖e7, and Black must react against it.

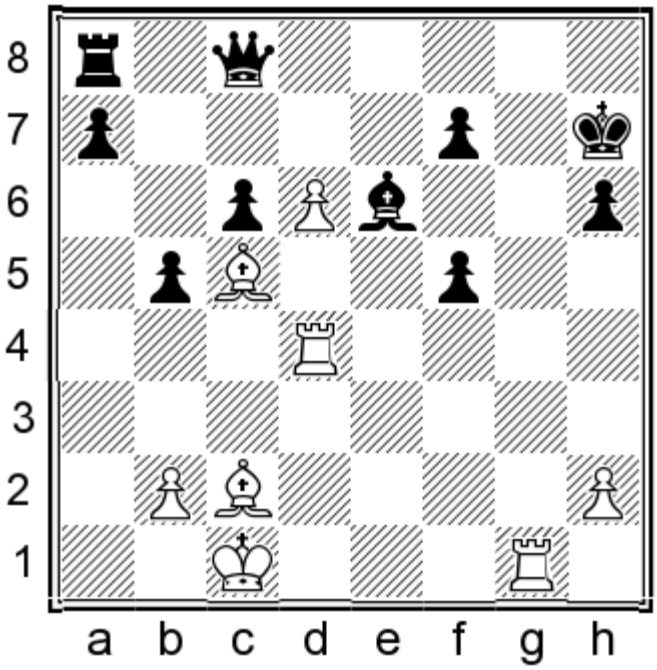
26...♗e6 27.f5!!

Really energetic play! The number of pawns doesn't matter — Mamedyarov wants to explode the blockade.

27...gxf5?

This is a decisive mistake as now White can create crucial threats against the king on the opened g-file. 27...♗xf5 was the only chance. 28.♖e7 ♗e6 (*28...♗xc2* is met with *29.d7 ♕f8 30.♔xc2*) 29.d7 ♕d8 and White can obtain a superior endgame with 30.♖e8+ ♕xe8 31.dxe8=♕+ ♖xe8 32.♖d6. Black has a lot of pawns for the piece, but they are weak. White can start to collect them using the harmony between the bishop pair and the rook.

28.♖g1+ ♔h7



28...♔h8 is refuted by 29.♖h4! ♕f8 30.♗d4+ f6 (*30...♔h7* transposes to the game.) 31.♖g6! and Black can't hold against the threats. For example: 31...♔h7 32.♖xf6 ♕g7 33.♖xf5!+– White ends up with a winning advantage.

29.♖dg4!

Now, and in the previous line, we can understand why the rook had to stay on the 4th rank! Black can't escape from the mating ideas.

29...♕f8 30.♗d4! f6

30...h5 doesn't change much. 31.♖g7+ ♔h6 32.♗e3++–

31.♖g6!

Black is helpless against ♖xf6.

31...♖d8 32.♖xf6

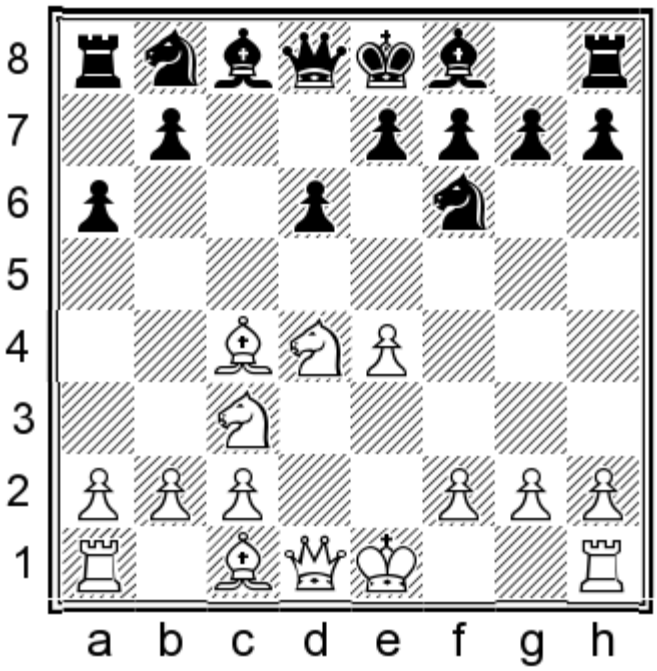
Black resigned in view of 32.♖xf6 ♕xd6 33.♗xf5+ ♗xf5 34.♖f7# White played like Mikhail Tal!

1–0

GAME 5
S. Rublevsky (2693)
V. Bologan (2712)
Poikovsky
06.10.2012
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

A typical Sicilian fight, where the players have castled on opposite sides and have launched dangerous attacks on their respective wings. As often happens in this kind of position, one side is just a tempo ahead. In this case, it was White.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗c4



This very sharp line is relatively rarely seen on the top level nowadays. Sergei Rublevsky is probably the biggest expert on it as White.

6...e6 7.♗b3 ♘bd7

Probably the main move is 7...b5 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♕f3 ♕b6 10.♗e3 ♕b7 which is considered to be good and leads to a full-of-life, double-edged position.

8.♗g5 ♕a5 9.♕d2

In general, the main idea of the 6.♗c4 system is to put pressure on the e6 pawn by pushing f4-f5, forcing Black to weaken his d5 square — either by e5 or exf5 — and to occupy it with the knight.

9...♗e7

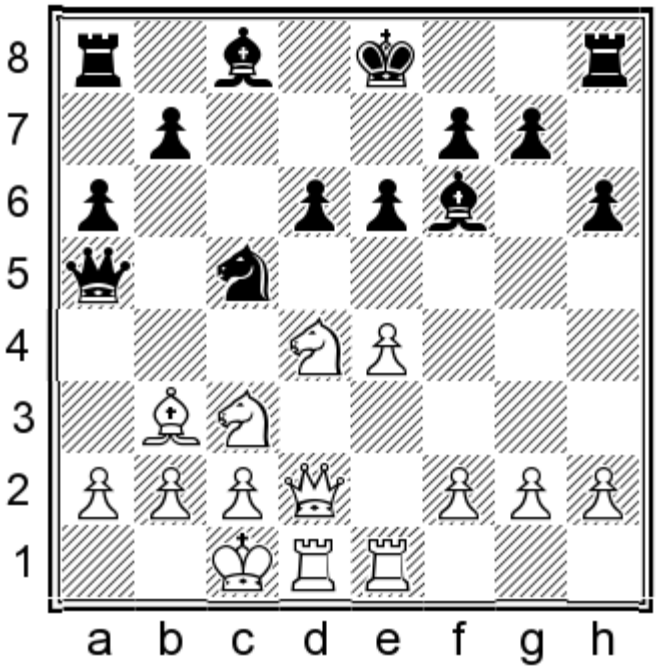
Bologan had already played a similar game this year, where he chose 9...h6 His opponent reacted badly with 10.♗h4. The critical approach is 10.♗xf6 ♘xf6 11.0-0-0 followed by f4-f5.

10.0-0-0 ♘c5 11.♖he1 h6?

This is a very strange mistake by Bologan in his preparation, since Rublevsky had already won a convincing game against Efimenko back in 2008, where he showed the drawback of this move. From a theoretical point of view, the critical move is 11...0-0 12.♔b1 ♕c7 13.f4 h6 and here White has to choose between two setups: 14.h4!?

(Or *14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.g4*)

12.♗xf6 ♗xf6



13.♘f5!

In that game, Rublevsky improved on his previous game against Ponomariov with this great novelty! We can say that this kind of piece sacrifice with ♘f5 or ♘d5 is very common in the Sicilian. White opens the central lines against the king. 13.♔b1 happened in the Rublevsky-Ponomariov, Elista 2007 game.

13...0-0

Accepting the sacrifice also leads to a worse position after 13...exf5 14.exf5+ ♗e6 This is the only move, other attempts losing instantly.

a) 14...♔f8? 15.♕xd6+ ♔g8 16.♖e8+ ♔h7 17.♖xh8+ ♔xh8 18.♕f8+ ♔h7 19.♗xf7 ♗xf5 20.♕xa8+– refreshing the threat on g8, White wins.;

b) 14...♔d8? 15.♕xd6+ ♗d7 16.♘d5 An experienced Sicilian player stops calculating at this moment, knowing that the attack must break through. This is not 'the exception'. 16...♖c8 (*16...♘xb3+ 17.axb3 ♕a1+ 18.♔d2 ♕a5+ 19.b4+–* with mate to follow.) 17.♘xf6 gxf6 18.♕xf6+ ♔c7 19.♕d6+ ♔d8 Now the strongest is 20.♗a4! deflecting the queen from the b6 square. ♕xd7 is the threat. 20...♕xa4 (*20...b5 21.♖e5+–*) 21.♕b6+ ♖c7 22.♕f6+ ♔c8 23.♕xh8++–;

15.fxe6 ♘xb3+ 16.cxb3 0-0 This is the lesser evil for Black. He's only a pawn down and the f6-bishop gives some compensation. 17.exf7+ ♖xf7 18.f4 ♖c8 19.♖e3 and ♔b1 is coming next, with an advantage.

14.♘xd6 ♖d8

White must play accurately, otherwise Black gets enough counterplay.

15.f4!

Trying to stabilize the d6 knight with e5. Black is forced to prevent it.

15...♘xb3+ 16.cxb3

If the king doesn't get to b1, White has to take back with the c-pawn. It might look a bit ugly, but this phalanx gives very good shelter for the king.

16...e5

This is the deviation from the Rublevsky-Efimenko game, however it was still commented on by White for a few more moves. 16...♗e7 happened previously. 17.e5 ♗xd6 18.exd6 b5 and White reacted strongly with 19.♕d4! ♖b8 (*19...b4? 20.♖e5!* traps the queen.) 20.b4! ♕b6 21.♕c5! with a clear extra pawn. White went on to win.

17.♕f2

White leaves the annoying pin and creates the ♘c4 threat.

17...exf4 18.e5!

With this small tactical trick White closes the diagonal of the powerful bishop, which was Black's main hope to get enough compensation.

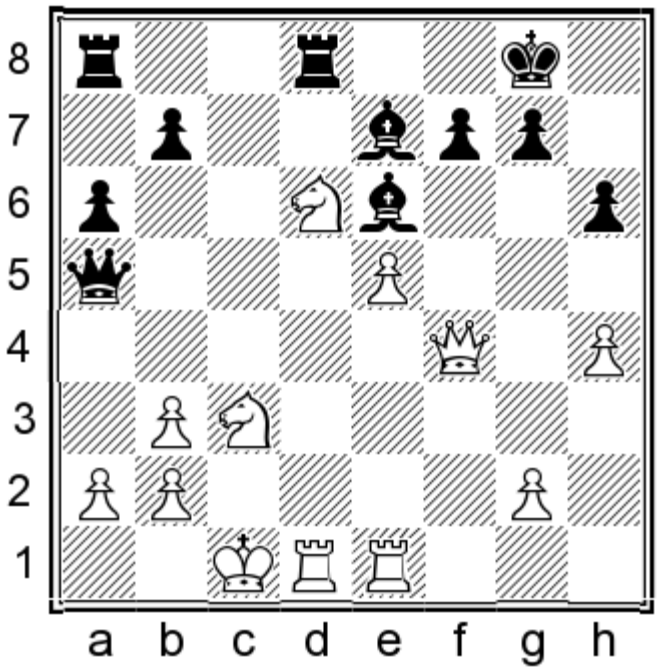
18...♗e7

18...♗xe5? drops a piece after 19.♘c4! ♖xd1+ 20.♖xd1 ♕c7 21.♘d5! ♕b8 and now 22.♘e7+ wins one of the bishops. 22...♔h7 23.♕c2+ g6 24.♘xc8+–

19.h4!

A great multi-purpose move. White wants to take on f4 (preventing ♗g5) and is already preparing for his future attack on the kingside.

19...♗e6 20.♕xf4



20...b5

This is the first new position for White. Rublevsky, in his commentary, analyzed 20...♖d7 21.♔b1 ♖ad8 22.b4 ♕c7 23.♘ce4 with an advantage.

21.♔b1

A necessary prophylactic move to protect the a2-pawn.

21...b4 22.♘ce4 ♕b6

Black has found the most principled and straight-forward plan of attack with a5-a4. He needs only two moves to reach the frontline. What to do for White? He has no resources to defend, so as the saying goes, the best defense is to attack!

23.g4!

Launching the counter-attack, but who is faster?!

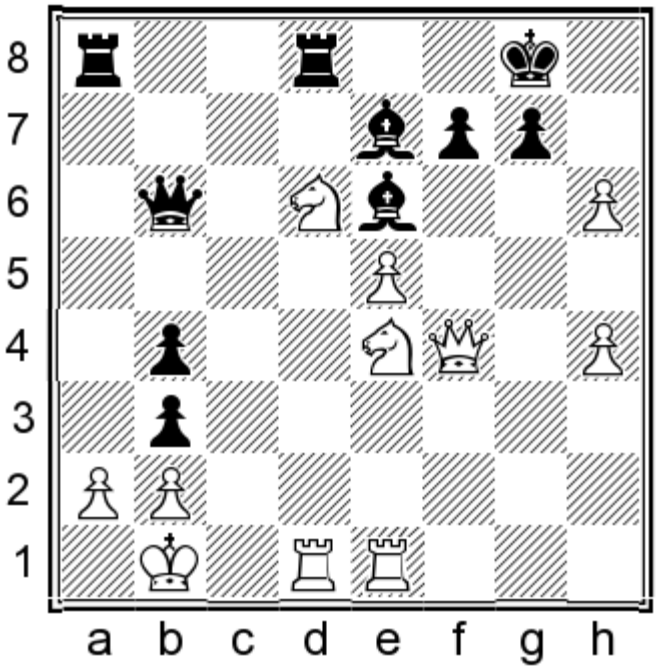
23...a5 24.g5 a4

Black can't try to gain some time with 24...h5 because of 25.♘f6+! ♔h8 (*25...gxf6 26.gxf6+–*) 26.♕f3! g6 27.♘xh5! and Black collapses. 27...a4 (*27...gxh5 28.♕xh5+ ♔g8 29.g6+–*) 28.♘xf7++–

25.gxh6!

Objectively this is the strongest move, but it required a huge amount of calculation. 25.♘f6+!? leads to a winning position as well, but in much simpler lines. 25...♔h8 Only move. (*25...♗xf6 26.gxf6 axb3 27.♖g1!* Black's main problem is that he still needs two moves to generate real threats with ♖xa2 and ♕a5, but this is enough for White to win the game. *27...♖xa2 28.♖xg7+ ♔f8 29.♖g8+! ♔xg8 30.♕g3+ ♔f8 31.♕g7#; 25...gxf6 26.gxf6+–* is over immediately.) 26.♘d5! This is the key move! The rest is not so difficult to find. 26...♗xd5 27.♖xd5 ♗xd6 (On *27...axb3* White can simply take material with *28.♘xf7+* and ♘xd8.) 28.♖xd6 ♖xd6 (*28...♕a5 29.♕xf7!* The queen defends the a2 pawn.) 29.exd6 axb3 and now 30.d7! is the way to victory. ♖e8 is the threat. 30...♕b5 (*30...♕g6+ 31.♕e4+–*) 31.♕d4! ♖d8 32.gxh6+–

25...axb3



26.hxg7!

This is a real dog-fight! Black must act quickly, since White is already close to mate with ♕h6!

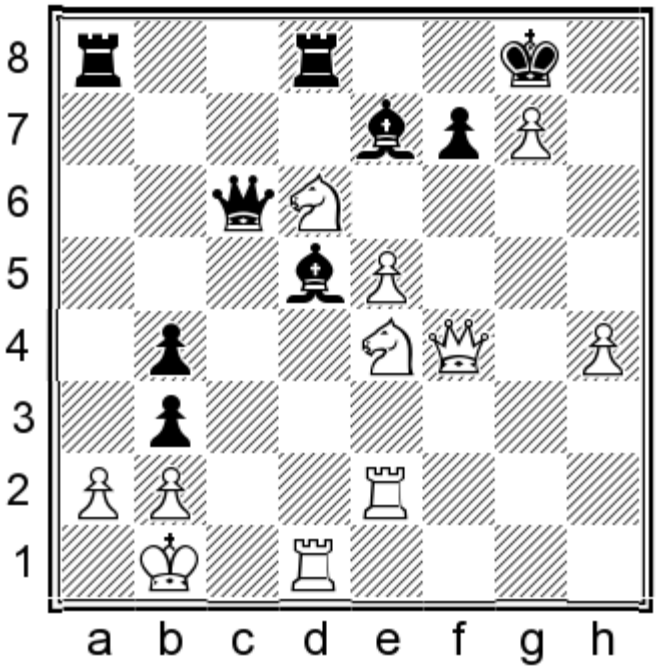
26...♕c6!

How to prevent ♕c2? 26...bxa2+? was the worst option. 27.♔a1 Black has no chance to continue the attack because of his own pawn. He would require a knight to jump to b3, otherwise there is not even a check. 26...♖xa2 is too slow. 27.♕h6 Black has only a few checks before resignation. 27...♖a1+ 28.♔xa1 ♕a5+ 29.♔b1 ♕a2+ 30.♔c1 ♕a1+ 31.♔d2 ♕xb2+ 32.♔e3+– The king has escaped.

27.♖e2!

Only move! White must keep the escaping route through c1–d2 free for his king. 27.♖c1? ♕a6; 27.♖d2? would be a decisive blunder. 27...♖xa2 28.♕h6 and Black is faster now with 28...♖a1+! 29.♔xa1 ♕a4+ 30.♔b1 ♕a2+ 31.♔c1 ♕a1#

27...♗d5!



It’s White’s turn to make a “cool” move! Black only has a few checks after 27...♕a6 28.♕h6! ♕xa2+ 29.♔c1 ♖ac8+ 30.♔d2! ♕xb2+ (*30...♖c2+ 31.♔e3 ♖xe2+ 32.♔xe2 ♕xb2+ 33.♔e3+–*) 31.♔e1+– It’s over. 27...♖xa2 28.♕h6+–

28.♘g3!

Refreshing the ♕h6 threat. 28.♘f2! with the same idea as the text move was also winning. 28...♗e6!? A tricky move but it doesn’t help. (*28...♖xa2 29.♕h6 ♖a1+ 30.♔xa1 ♕a4+ 31.♔b1 ♕a2+ 32.♔c1+–*) 29.♕h6! ♗f5+ 30.♘xf5 ♖xd1+ 31.♘xd1 bxa2+ 32.♔a1+– The h6-queen is excellently placed. It doesn’t only threaten mate, but also covers the c1 square.

28...♖xa2

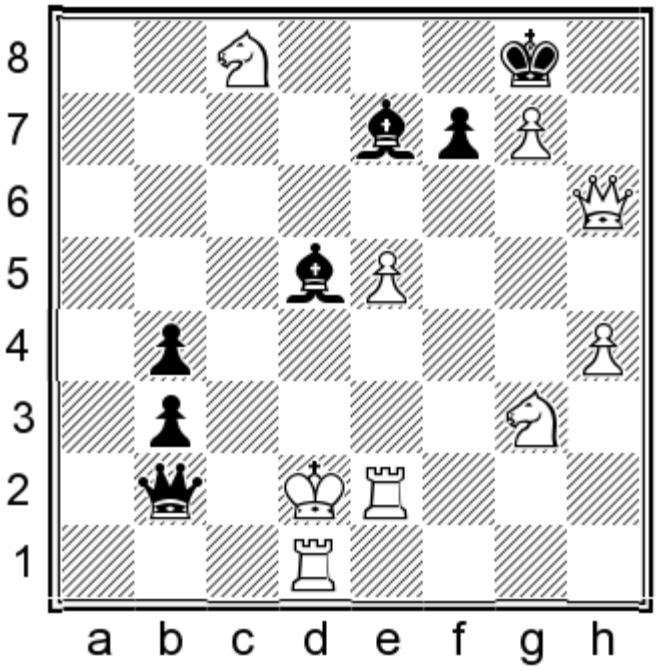
There was nothing else available against ♕h6, so Black must try a desperate attack. 28...♕a4 loses to 29.a3! bxa3 30.♕h6! ♕xh4 and now White has only one winning move. 31.♕h8+! ♕xh8 32.gxh8=♕+ ♔xh8 33.♖xd5+–;

28...♕a6 is refuted by 29.a3! bxa3 30.♕h6!+–

29.♕h6 ♖a1+ 30.♔xa1 ♕a6+ 31.♔b1 ♕a2+ 32.♔c1 ♖c8+

Black wants to offer the opportunity for his bishop to join the attack on c5. 32...♕a1+ is similar to the game. 33.♔d2 ♕xb2+ 34.♔e3!! Just as in the game, White has to run forward for the win. (34.♔e1 leads to perpetual check. 34...♕c3+ 35.♖dd2 (*35.♔f2 ♕f3+=; 35.♖ed2 ♕xg3+*) 35...♕xg3+ 36.♔f1 ♕h3+ Black holds the draw with precise checks. 37.♖g2 ♗xg2+ 38.♖xg2 ♕h1+ 39.♖g1 (*39.♔f2?? ♗xh4+*) 39...♕f3+ 40.♔e1 ♕c3+ 41.♔f2 ♕d4+ Draw.) 34...♕c3+ (*34...♕xe5+ 35.♘ge4+–* No more checks.) 35.♖d3 ♕xe5+ (*35...♕c1+ 36.♖ed2 ♕e1+ 37.♔f4+–* The safest place for the king.) 36.♘ge4+–

33.♘xc8 ♕a1+ 34.♔d2 ♕xb2+



35.♔e3!!

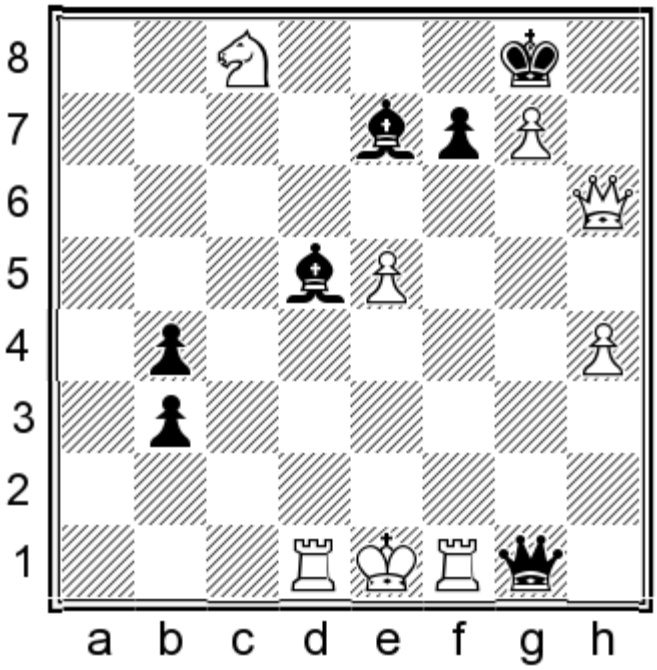
The brave run is the only way to victory! Black runs out of checks very quickly in all lines. 35.♔e1 leads to a draw again. 35...♕c3+ 36.♖ed2

a) 36.♖dd2 ♕c1+ 37.♖d1 (*37.♔f2?? ♗c5+* wins.) 37...♕c3+;

b) 36.♔f1 ♕f3+=;

36...♕xg3+ 37.♖f2 ♕g1+ and White must accept a draw with 38.♔e2!

(38.♖f1??



38...♗xh4+! 39.♔e2

(*39.*♕*xh4* ♕*e3#* A picturesque mate!)

39...♕g4+ 40.♔d3 ♗c4+ 41.♔e3 ♗g5+)

38...♕g4+ 39.♔d2 ♕d4+ 40.♔e1 ♕e4+ 41.♔f1

(41.♖e2?? would be too greedy. 41...♗xh4+! 42.♔d2

(*42.*♔*f1* ♕*h1#*)

42...♕d4+ 43.♔c1 ♕a1+ 44.♔d2 ♕c3#)

41...♕h1+ with perpetual check.

35...♕c3+

35...♗c5+ 36.♔f4+–;

35...♕xe5+ 36.♔f2 ♗c5+ 37.♔f1+–

36.♖d3 ♗c5+

36...♕xe5+ 37.♔f2 ♗c5+ 38.♔f1 ♕a1+ 39.♖e1+–

37.♔f4 ♕c1+ 38.♖ed2 ♕c4+ 39.♖d4

No more checks left, so Black resigned! A really spectacular and amusing game!

1–0

GAME 6
A. Volokitin (2724)
S. Mamedyarov (2748)
European Club Cup
Eilat ISR
11.10.2012, [B94]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

A truly spectacular game, even though a closer look shows mistakes by both sides.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 ♘g4

At the moment, this 6...♘g4 line against the ♗e3 system is doing very well. Volokitin, as a huge theoretician, decides to play another system.

7.♗c1

Black has nothing better than retreating the knight. 7.♗g5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♗g3 ♗g7 is the starting position if White decides to challenge the 6...♘g4 variation.

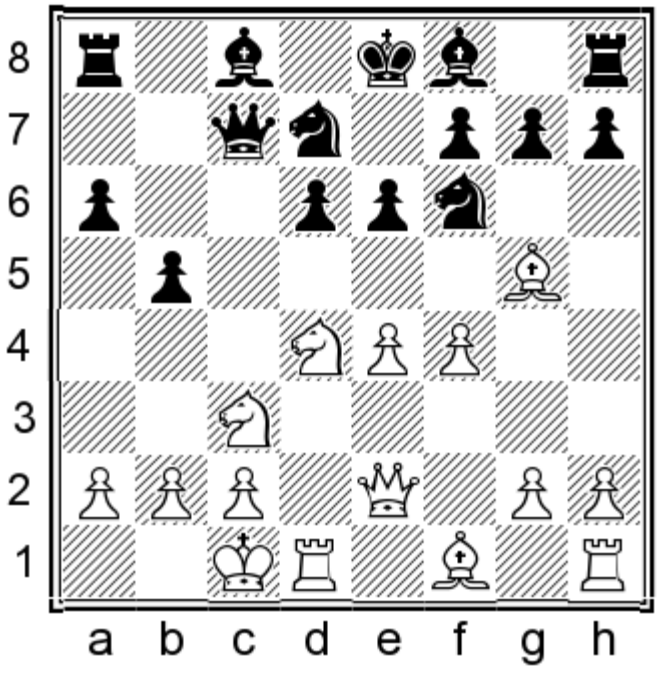
7...♘f6

White goes for the sharpest system of the Najdorf and plays

8.♗g5 ♘bd7 9.♕e2 e6

9...b5 is a good alternative for Black if he wants to avoid the long theoretical battles with ...e6. We analyzed the Motylev-Wang Hao game in the 19th edition of CEWN.

10.0-0-0 ♕c7 11.f4 b5



We are still just at the beginning of theory, and here White chooses a side-line.

12.f5

This is the most-principled idea, to weaken the d5 square by putting pressure on the e6 pawn. However, the main — and probably better — move is the prophylactic 12.a3 prior to pushing f5.

12...b4!

12...e5 meets with a nice and typical response: 13.♘d5! ♘xd5 14.exd5 The knight is ready to occupy the c6 square.

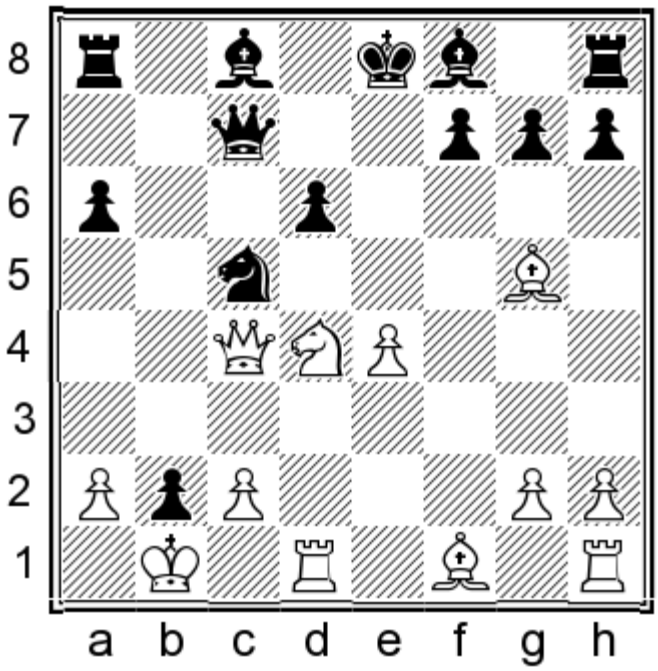
13.fxe6 bxc3 14.exd7+ ♘xd7!

This is the stronger recapture. White gets a better endgame after 14...♗xd7 15.♕c4! cxb2+ 16.♔b1 ♕xc4 17.♗xc4 ♗e7 18.♖he1 White wants to play ♘f5. Despite the fact that the queens have left the board, White has serious threats. Black needs to transfer his knight to e5 to reduce the pressure, but it doesn't solve all his problems either. 18...♘g4 19.♗f4! ♘e5 20.♗b3 White wants to play ♘f5 again, with the idea of gaining the bishop pair and improving his pawn structure (after ♗xf5 exf5). Black has to parry it with 20...g6 21.♘f3! and White has the better prospects!

15.♕c4 cxb2+ 16.♔b1

The b2-pawn provides a nice shelter for the king. This is a known motif in the Sicilian. The same often happens on the other side as well, when Black is castled kingside and White's attack arrives with g6. He takes with gxh7 and Black hides his king with ♔h8.

16...♘c5!



16...♕xc4 leads to a similar position to the 14...♗xd7 line. White will be better here as well. 17.♗xc4 ♘e5 18.♗b3 ♗e7 19.♗f4!

17.e5!

White urgently opens the lines against the Black king, which still needs a few moves to get to safety. Both players have definitely studied this position, since it has already been played before.

17...♖b8!

A strong novelty, recommended by the computer. 17...dxe5?! happened before, but White refuted it elegantly by 18.♘b5!! axb5 19.♕d5! with a triple attack: ♕d8, ♕xa8 and ♗xb5. 19...♗e7 This loses immediately. (19...f6 is more resistant, but the attack breaks through after 20.♗xb5+ ♔e7 21.♗e3! Black has only one ugly move to protect the c5 knight and the a8 rook. 21...♘b7 22.♗c4! ♘d6 (On *22...♔e8 23.♗b6!* wins. *23...♕xb6 24.♕f7#*) 23.♗c5 with a huge attack.) 20.♗xb5+ ♔f8 21.♗xe7+ ♔xe7 22.♕xa8± Guseinov-Benitah, Marrakesh 2010.

18.exd6 ♗xd6 19.♖e1+!

Depriving Black of the right to castle!

19...♔f8!

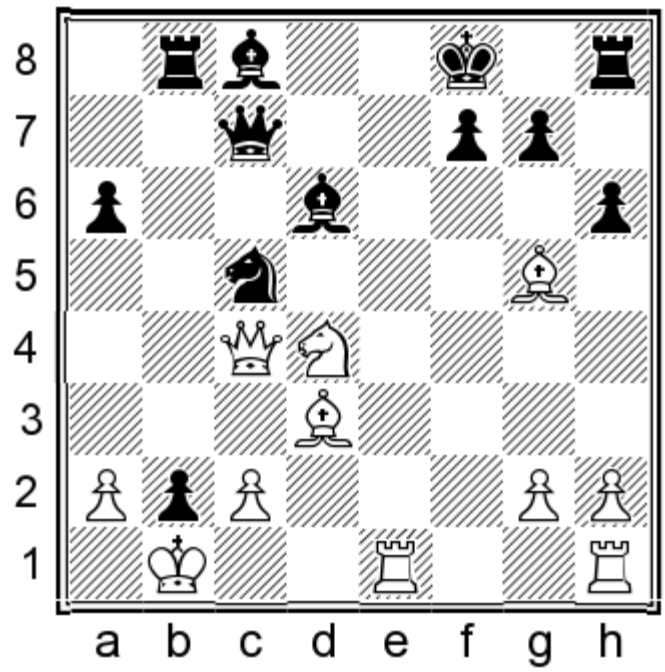
Both kings are quite naked, but they are still safe against the direct threats. 19...♘e6? loses to the little combination 20.♘xe6 ♗xe6 21.♖xe6+! fxe6 22.♕xe6+ ♗e7 23.♗c4+– Black can't withstand the threats after the h1 rook joins the attack.

20.♗d3!

With the idea of freeing the f1–square for the rook.

20...h6?

This loses. Mamedyarov's idea was to open the back-rank in order to be able to take the d3 bishop, but he had missed a fantastic tactical blow!



20...♘xd3? is refuted by 21.♗e7+!! when Black either loses his queen or after 21...♔g8 22.♗xd6!+– wins because of the back-rank. This was the idea behind 20...h6, when after 21.♗h4, this line works perfectly for Black! However, the great 20...♖b4!! seems to solve all the problems. 21.♕xb4 ♘xd3 22.♕a4 ♘xe1 23.♖xe1 ♕d7 Black parries the concrete threats and wants to coordinate his pieces with h6, ♔g8-h7.

21.♗d8!!

Beautiful! White sacrifices a bishop in order to win some tempi for the attack. 21.♗h4? ♘xd3 22.♗e7+ ♔g8 and the king has “luft” on h7.

21...♕xd8 22.♖hf1!

The f7 square is the critical target! White has an extra option to increase the pressure...

22...♖b7

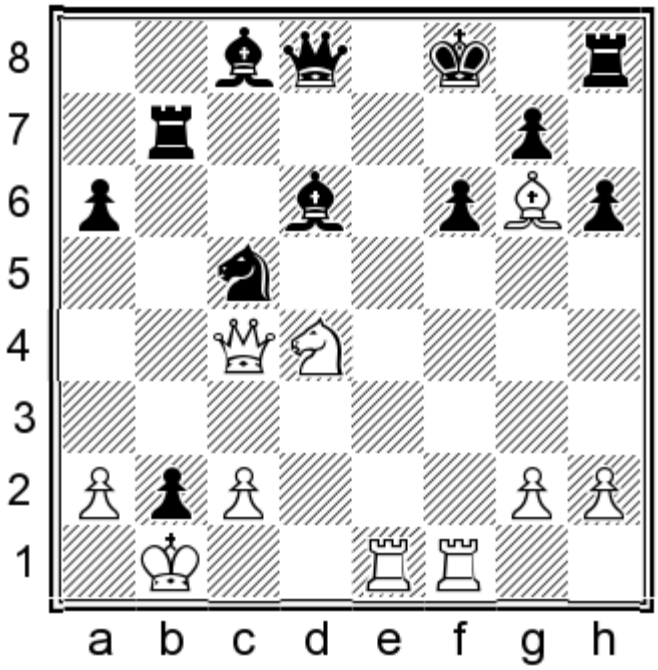
22...f6 loses as well to 23.♘c6 ♕c7 24.♗g6+–;

22...♕c7 23.♗g6!+–

23.♗g6!

Forcing a fatal weakness with f6.

23...f6



White is winning due to the strong g6 bishop, which creates threats on f7 and e8. But how to break through?

24.♕d5?

With the idea of ♕xd6, deflecting the queen, followed by ♖e8 mate. However, this allows Black to get back into the game. The easiest is probably 24.♖e3!+– doubling the rooks on the e-file. Black has no acceptable answer against it. The nicest is 24.♘c6! ♕d7 and now 25.♖e3! again, with the idea of doubling the rooks, and on 25...♕xc6 White wins by deflecting the queen from the e8 square. 26.♕d5!! ♕d7 27.♕xd6+! ♕xd6 28.♖e8#

24...♖e7!

The game is unclear, thanks to this tactical resource:

25.♘c6 ♗b7!

Many pieces are hanging. Where to take? 25...♖xe1+? 26.♖xe1 ♕d7 would have lost again to 27.♕xd6+! ♕xd6 28.♖e8#

26.♕xc5!

After dropping almost all of his advantage, Volokitin starts to play extremely precisely again! On 26.♖xe7 ♕xe7! keeps Black alive.

26...♗xc5 27.♘xd8

Black must move his b7 bishop and also has to cover the e6 square against the threatened check.

27...♗d5

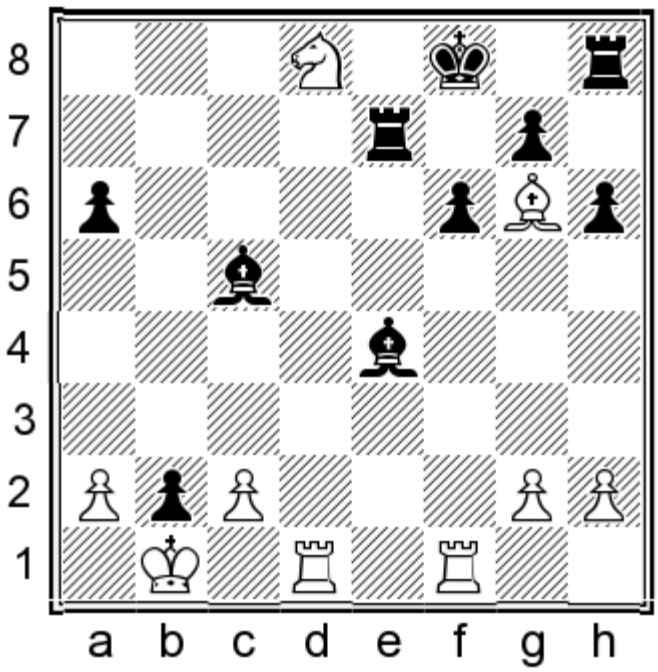
27...♗xg2? loses to 28.♘e6+! ♔g8 29.♘xc5+–;

27...♗c8 is met by the same move as in the game.

28.♖d1!

Very well played! White creates different kinds of threats around the d8 square. At the same time, he keeps the rooks on the board in order not to help Black solve the problem of the h8 rook.

28...♗e4



28...♖e5 was an alternative. Probably the strongest for White is 29.♖f5 ♖xf5 30.♗xf5 ♗c4 31.♖d7 Black hasn't yet managed to solve the problem with his h8 rook. 28...♗c4? fails to the nice 29.♘c6! which wins.

29.♘f7!

Another fantastic shot! Volokitin shows his best again! 29.♗xe4 ♖xe4 and the rook escapes soon, Black is fine.

29...♖xf7?

The decisive mistake. Black missed the upcoming blow! Critical is 29...♗xg6 30.♘xh8 ♗e8 when White is an exchange up, but suddenly, instead of the rook, another piece is trapped on h8. 31.♖d8 with the idea of ♘g6. 31...♖e4 32.♘g6+ ♔f7 33.♘f4 White should be slightly better, although Black has strong counterplay with the bishop pair after 33...♗b5 34.♘d3 ♗a3.

30.♖fe1!!

An unpleasant surprise: the back-rank decides the game! Black expected 30.♗xe4 and he probably wanted to save the opposite-colored bishop endgame after 30...g5 31.♗d5 ♖a7 32.♖xf6+ ♔g7 33.♖c6 ♗e7 White will end up with an extra pawn, but Black has real chances to get a draw.

30...♗xc2+

30...♗xg6 31.♖d8#;

30...f5 31.♖d8+ ♔e7 32.♖xh8 ♖f6 doesn’t save Black because of 33.♗xf5!+–

31.♔xc2 ♔g8

The cruellest part of the game is just ahead of us!

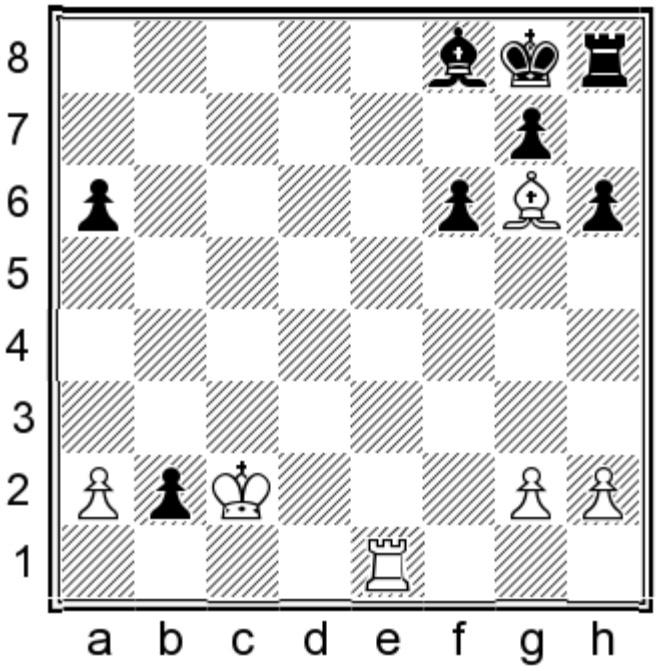
32.♖d8+!

White does not get greedy by taking the rook, but rather enjoys the situation with it imprisoned on h8. 32.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 is also a decent chance to win for White, but the text is much better.

32...♖f8

32...♗f8 33.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 34.♖d7+ ♔g6 35.♖e8+– Black can’t leave the pin.

33.♖xf8+ ♗xf8



34.g4!!

A picturesque final position! Black is two pawns up, but he's just completely lost, since he has zero chances to rescue his pieces from the f8, g8 and h8 squares. The White king collects the b2 and a6 pawns, followed by promoting his own a-pawn. 34.g4 f5 (*34...h5 35.gxh5 f5* doesn't help. The easiest is *36.♖f1 ♗e7 37.♖xf5 ♗f6* Black can't get out with his pieces because of *38.♖c5!*+–) 35.gxf5 h5 White blocks with 36.h4+–

1–0

GAME 7
I. Cheparinov (2710)
M. Mchedlishvili (2639)
TCh-ESP CECLUB Div Honor 2012
Leon ESP (3.4)
07.11.2012, [E11]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We will now look at a very interesting and crazy game, with some great attacking play by White –who admittedly received a little bit of help from Black.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♗b4+

This is a move for "lazy" people who are trying to avoid the main-lines. Not a bad opening choice against a very well prepared Cheparinov, who was for a long time one of Topalov's seconds.

4.♘bd2

White chooses the very main line, which is not really a surprise...

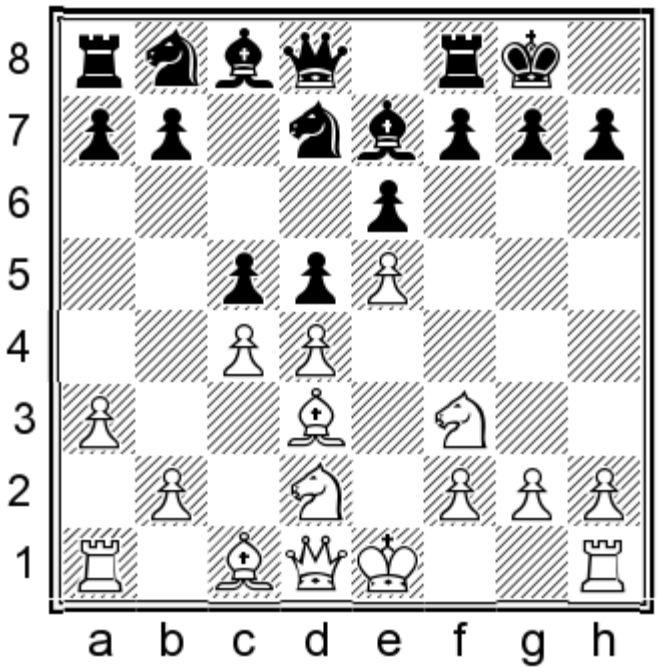
4...0-0 5.a3 ♗e7 6.e4

Lately we've seen a lot of games in this line, but until now nobody has been able to show a clear way for White to get an advantage.

6...d5 7.e5 ♘fd7 8.♗d3

8.b4 a5 9.b5 c5 This is the other main-line approach.

8...c5



9.h4!?

This new move was introduced quite recently and leads to very sharp play. Black is crushing White's center, and White is trying to give mate.

9...g6

This seems to be the main move. White wanted to play ♗xh7 and in case of 9...h6 then 10.♗b1, followed by ♕c2, when it can get very dangerous for Black.

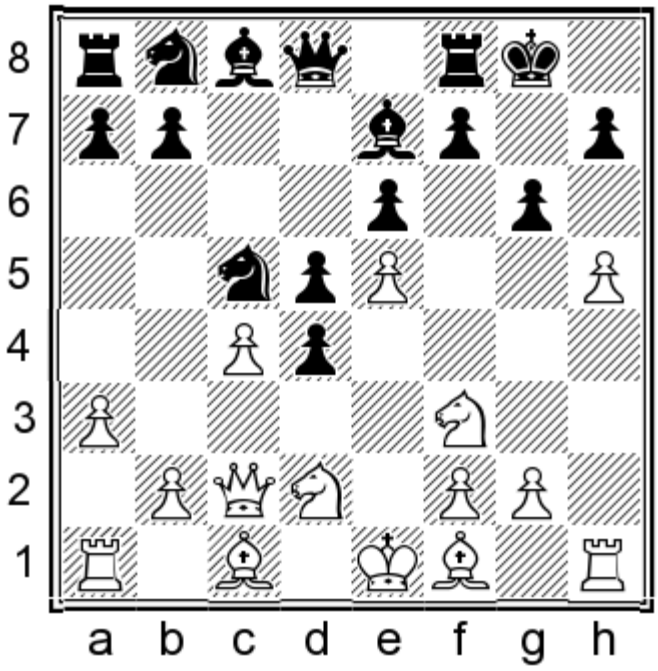
10.h5 cxd4 11.♕c2!?

We are following the game Ding,L-Tomashevsky,E.

11...♘c5

A logical move. 11...♕e8 12.♘b3 ♘c6 13.♗f4 dxc4 14.♗xc4 ♘b6 15.♗d3 ♘d5 16.♗h6 with a clearly better position for White. Still in the game Ding,L-Tomashevsky, E 2012.

12.♗f1



12.hxg6 ♘xd3+ 13.♕xd3 fxg6 and Black seems to have survived the attack. To sacrifice the bishop doesn't make any sense for White: 12.♗xg6? fxg6 13.hxg6 d3! and Black is again doing well.

12...d3!

Black forces White to exchange his light-squared bishop, which could become a very dangerous piece if White is in time to play b4 next, and then come back with the bishop to d3.

13.♗xd3 ♘xd3+ 14.♕xd3

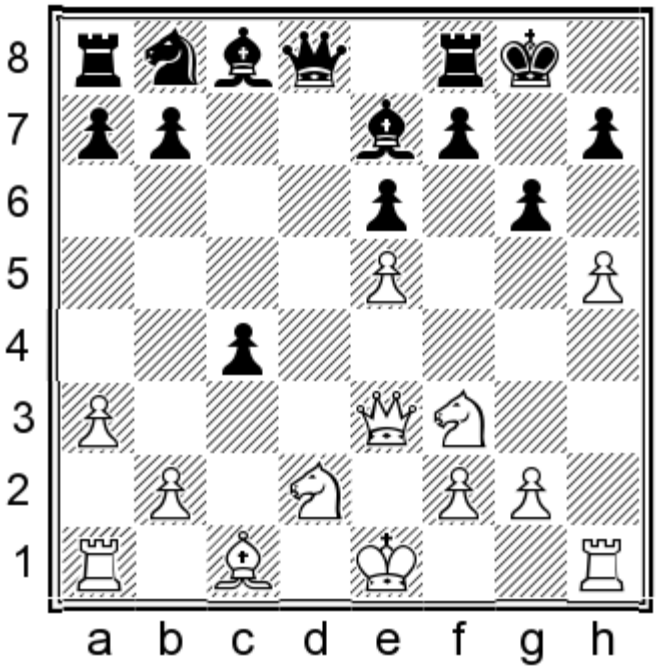
We have reached a very interesting position. If Black manages to develop, he'll have a great position, but White's attacking chances don't look too bad either.

14...dxc4

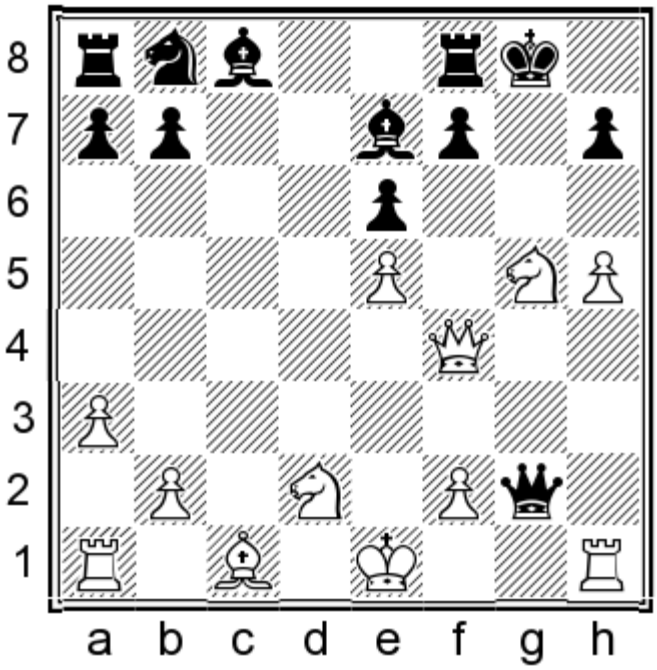
A very direct move. Black gives away the e4 square for the knight. On the other hand, the exchange of queens would solve all his problems!

15.♕e3

The White queen is trying to reach the h6 square.



Why not 15.♕xc4!? I guess Cheparinov was a bit afraid of 15...♕d5 and where to go with the queen? 16.♕f4! (*16.hxg6 fxg6; 16.*♕*g4* ♘*c6* doesn't bring White anything, of course.) 16...g5 It seems like Black is fine, but 17.♘xg5 ♕xg2



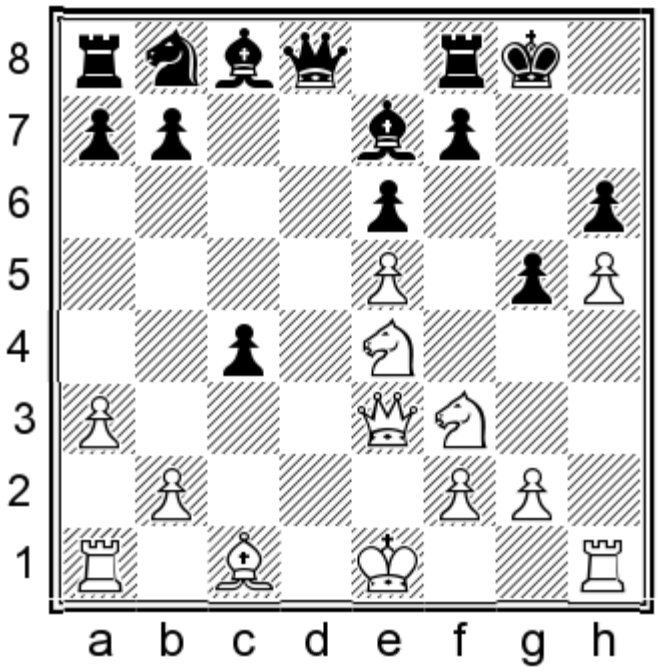
18.♖h3! White's rook is going to g3, winning the piece back. It seems like White is somewhat better.

15...g5!

Of course, Black does not allow White to play ♕h6.

16.♘e4 h6

We are in a very unclear position, and White has a lot of different plans with which to proceed: ♘h2-♘g4-♘f6 looks quite tempting, as well as ♗d2 followed by 0-0-0, but Ivan chooses the most spectacular choice.



17.♘fxg5!?

I am not at all sure about the strength of this move, but from a practical point of view, it is very interesting

17...hxg5 18.♕g3 ♔h8

Black needs to move the king off the g-file.

19.♗xg5 ♗xg5

On 19...♖g8 20.♗xe7 ♕xe7 21.♕f4 and White retains a strong attack.

20.♘xg5 ♘c6

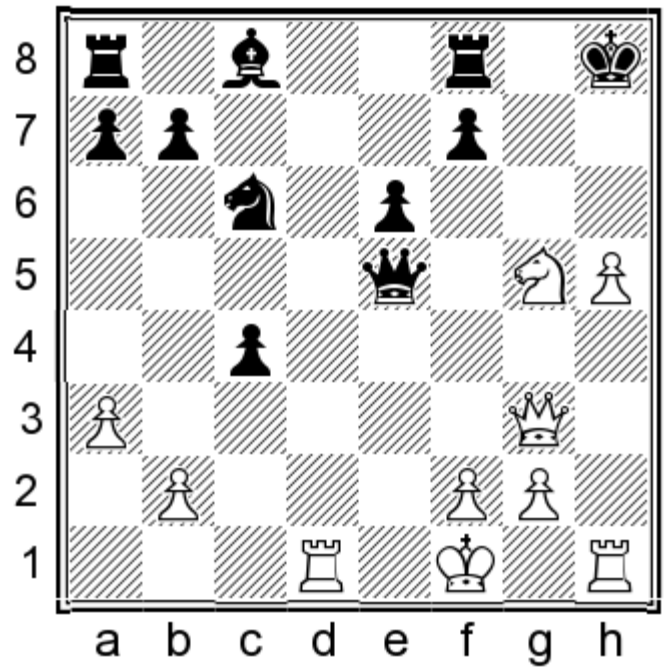
Black is playing very logically. He needed to develop the knight from b8.

21.♖d1!

A very good move based on a precise tactical calculation.

21...♕c7

On 21...♕a5+ 22.♔f1 and Black can’t take the e5 pawn. 22...♕xe5



(*22...♘xe5 23.♕f4* followed by ♖h3, with a super dangerous attack.) 23.♘xf7+! A very nice tactical blow. 23...♖xf7 24.♖d8+ ♘xd8 25.♕xe5+ and White is winning easily.

22.f4

At least Black got rid of the ♕f4 threat.

22...♖g8

This looks like a very slow move, but it's a good one! 22...f6 seems to put Black in danger. 23.exf6 ♖xf6 24.0-0 We see here a very strange position. White is a piece down for just a pawn, but Black's king is very weak, and it's not clear how to develop the bishop from c8. I guess this kind of position is just much easier to play with White...

23.♕e3!

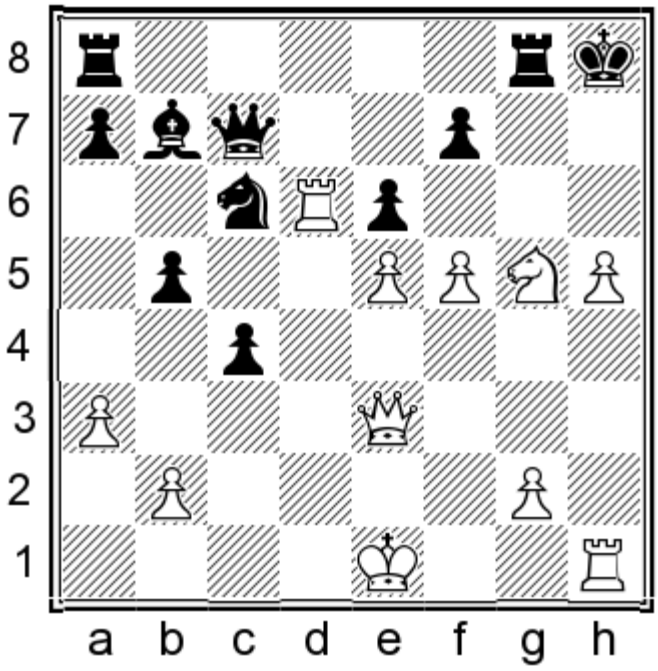
An excellent place for the queen. Pushing f5 is a future threat.

23...b5

Very logical. Black develops the bishop from c8.

24.♖d6 ♗b7 25.f5

And we have reached the critical position. White has a lot of threats; for example, to play ♘e4 next. Can Black do something about it?



25...♕e7??

This move is losing, but Black could have played: 25...♘d4!! A very beautiful tactical possibility. Suddenly, Black is winning! White can't take the knight on d4, and if he doesn't take it, Black will simply play ♘xf5 next. 26.♖xd4 (*26.♕xd4 ♖xg5* brings nothing for White.) 26...♖xg5! That's the key... 27.♕xg5 ♕xe5+ 28.♔f1 ♕xd4 and Black is a full piece up!

26.♘e4!

And now White is winning!

26...♕f8 27.fxe6

Black is helpless. White wants to play e7 next and there is no defense against it...

27...♘xe5 28.e7 ♘d3+ 29.♔f1

What a game! Out of the opening White should have been better, then came a piece sacrifice, a good defense by Black who missed the very beautiful move 25...♘d4!! and finally, White reached his target — the Black king. This was a true fighting game!

1–0

GAME 8
B. Jobava (2711)
S. Mamedyarov (2764)
SportAccord Rapid Men 2012
Beijing CHN (2)
14.12.2012, [A01]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

The highly-talented Georgian super-GM, Baadur Jobava, has been using a new weapon recently.

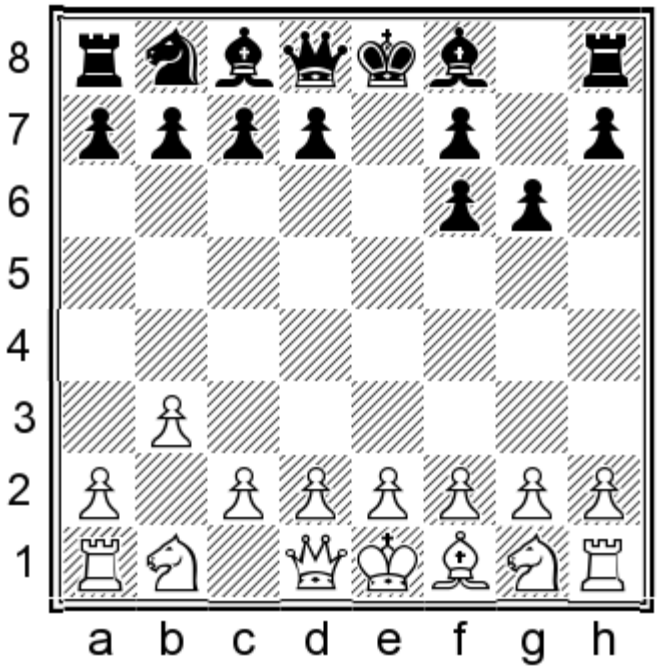
1.b3

He wants to avoid the long theoretical lines and wants to play pure chess, where, as we'll see, he is very strong.

1...♘f6 2.♗b2 g6 3.♗xf6!?

White creates doubled pawns but, on the other hand, he gives up the bishop pair.

3...exf6



4.c4!

It's time to fight for the important central squares, before Black occupies them with d5 and takes over the initiative.

4...♗g7

It would have made more sense to open the position with 4...d5!? in order to make the two bishops more effective. 5.cxd5 ♕xd5 6.♘c3 ♕d8 followed by f5 and ♗g7.

5.♘c3 f5 6.♖c1

White wants to keep his structure intact and prevent ...♗xc3.

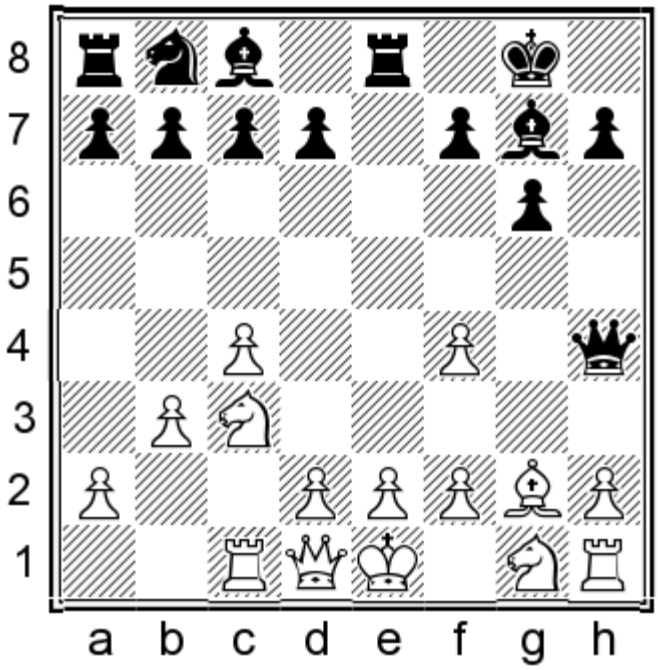
6...0-0 7.g3 ♖e8

The most logical development of Black's pieces would have been 7...d6 8.♗g2 c6 9.e3 The g1 knight should go to f4. 9...♘d7 10.♘ge2 White probably has some edge. A possible plan could be b4-b5 to strengthen the power of the g2 bishop.

8.♗g2 f4?!

Mamedyarov wants to open the position. Black wins back the pawn based on tactical ideas, but it has a huge drawback...

9.gxf4 ♕h4



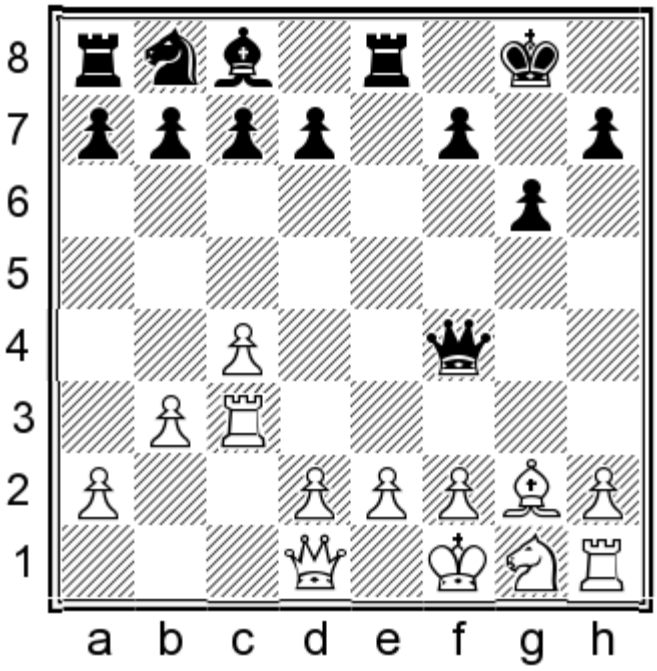
10.♔f1!!

A great move, which forces Black to give up his strong g7 bishop, as otherwise White protects his pawn with e3. The immediate e3 doesn't do the job because of the pin along the e-file. 10.f5 ♕g5 Black wins back the pawn and keeps his healthy pawn structure. 10.♘d5 ♘a6 11.♘f3 ♕g4 and c6 next. Black wins back the pawn.

10...♗xc3

10...♕xf4 loses a huge amount of material. 11.♘d5! ♕d6 12.c5! c7 and one of the rooks fall because after 12...♕c6 13.♘e7++– wins.

11.♖xc3 ♕xf4



12.h4!

Without the dark-squared bishop, the Black king becomes vulnerable. The c1-rook occupies a perfect spot, as it could be immediately switched to the attack along the 3rd rank.

12...d6

12...h5 is met with 13.♘h3! ♕xh4 14.♖g3 and ♘g5 next, with a huge attack.

13.h5

Without touching the h1-rook, we find that it's already perfectly placed and co-operates in the attack.

13...♘c6 14.♘h3

14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♖g3 also made sense, followed by bringing the knight into the attack.

14...♕d4 15.e3

I am not sure if this was the strongest continuation (as it closes off the c3 rook) but in the game it worked out well. Jobava estimated that bringing the knight to f4 was more important and the rook could be activated again later. 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.♘g5 looked pretty dangerous as well. Black's kingside is too shaky. ♗d5 and ♖f3 could be unpleasant, but the simple ♖g3 is also quite nice.

15...♕f6 16.♘f4 ♘e7 17.♕f3

White threatens to win a pawn with ♘xg6, as after ♕xf3, Black has an important intermediate check with ♘xe7.

17...♕g5?

17...g5 Black should have lived with the chance of trading the queens, as the attack was growing with a lot of speed. 18.♘d5 ♕xf3 19.♗xf3 ♘xd5 20.cxd5 Obviously, White is doing better here as well, but it's still preferable to getting

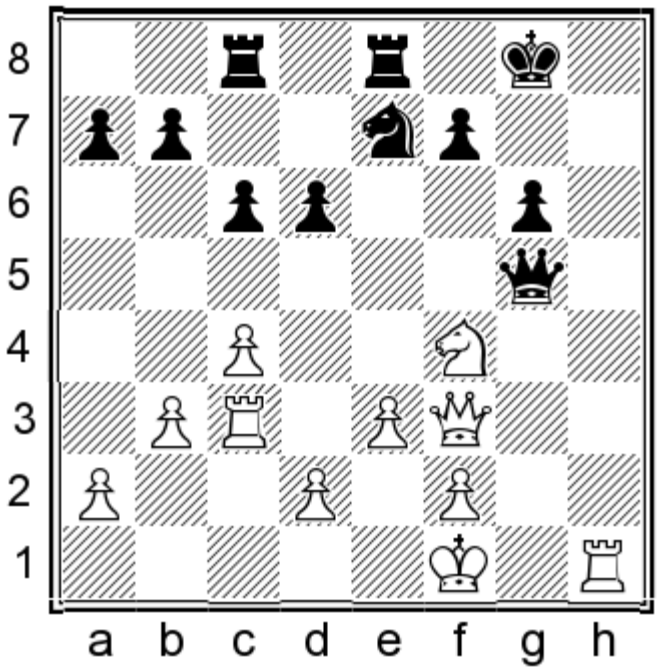
mated. The c7-pawn becomes really weak. 20...♖e7 21.♔g2 ♗f5 22.♖hc1 ♖c8 23.d3! to prevent g4 and ♗e4 check, followed by b4-b5. a7 could be a potential target as well. However, Black can hope for survival after playing ...h6 and walking his king to d8.

18.♗h3

The c8 bishop had to be exchanged in order to occupy the h-file.

18...c6 19.hxg6 hxg6 20.♗xc8 ♖axc8

It's time to launch the decisive attack.



21.♘h5!

Provoking another huge weakness with the threat of ♘f6.

21...f5

21...gxh5 drops the queen. 22.♖g1+–

22.♖d3!

Another great move. The rook joins the battle again!

22...♔f7

Black is ready to take on h5 now... 22...♖cd8 is refuted by 23.♖g1 ♕h4 24.♖d4! This is the main point of 22.♖d3. The queen must allow the ♘f6 winning move.

23.♘f4

with the double threat of ♖h7 and ♖xd6. Black is lost.

23...♖cd8 24.♖h7+ ♔f6 25.♕d1!!

A beautiful finish to a great game. Black has no good defense against the threatened ♕a1 mate! The game could have been slightly prolonged with 25.♕d1 ♘g8 26.♕a1+ ♖e5 but White has several wins here. 27.♕d4 and ♕xd6 cannot be parried, because even after (*27.♘h3* and f4 is the easiest.) 27...♕g4 28.♕xd6+! works. 28...♖xd6 29.♖xd6+ ♔g5 30.♖xg6#

1–0

GAME 9
A. Korobov (2702)
P. Negi (2641)
AICF-AAI Cup 2012
New Delhi IND (9)
29.12.2012, [B90]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

A lovely fighting game awaits. An interesting detail to mention is that Korobov played 1.e4 for only the second time in his life.

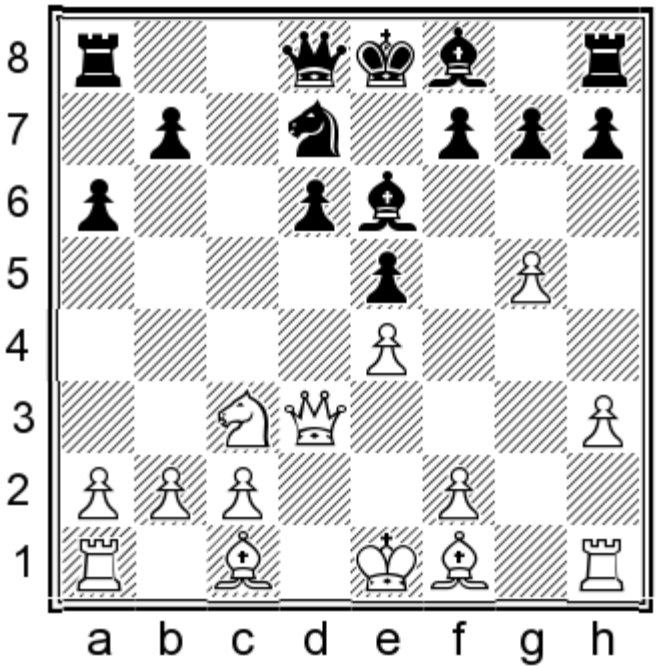
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6

The Sicilian Najdorf is the main repertoire of Korobov as Black too, so he had to be familiar with the arising positions. From a psychological point of view, it was not a clever opening decision by Negi, who plays many other lines as well...

6.h3 ♘c6

A side-line. 6...e6 and 6...e5 are the two main moves.

7.g4 ♘xd4 8.♕xd4 e5 9.♕d3 ♗e6 10.g5 ♘d7



11.f4

There was only one game in this position in the database before this, and Korobov was marshalling the Black pieces in it!

11...♖c8

This is new! Black allows himself to be completely squeezed after f5, but he is hoping for dynamic counterplay with d5 later on. 11...exf4 12.♗xf4 ♗e7 happened before. 13.0-0-0 (*13.♕e3* might be an improvement, followed by 0-0-0 and ♘d5.) 13...♗xg5 14.♕xd6 ♗xf4+ 15.♕xf4 0-0 16.♖g1 ♖c8 17.♘d5 ♔h8 18.♗e2 White's chances seem to be preferable, although Black was able to hold the draw on Kuzubov-Korobov, Plovdiv 2012.

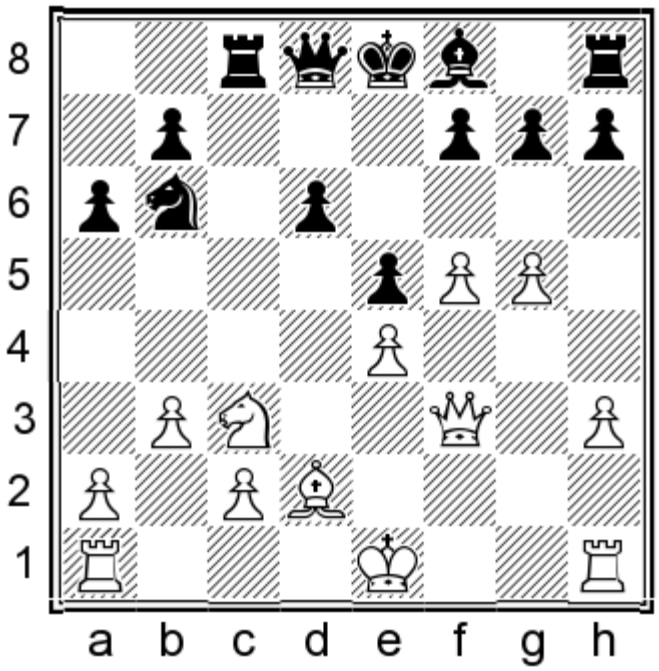
12.f5 ♗c4 13.♕f3 ♘b6

This is too slow. 13...d5 was the only critical move from the opening point of view. We see this break in many different lines. 14.♗xc4 (The main point of Black's idea comes after *14.exd5 ♗b4! 15.♗d2 ♗xc3 16.♗xc3 ♕xg5* and Black has jumped out and taken over the initiative!) 14...♖xc4 15.♘xd5 is the correct reaction. The knight is extremely strong on d5. 15...♖xc2 White should objectively be better, but he has some problems to find safety for his king, as he will not be able to castle queenside. (*15...♘c5* is met with the simple retreat *16.♘c3* and ♗d2 0-0-0 next with a clear extra pawn.)

14.♗xc4 ♘xc4 15.b3

This allows Black back into the game. 15.f6! would have been much stronger! Black is doomed without the ...d5 counterplay. The game could continue, for instance, with 15...♕a5 (*15...gxf6 16.♘d5* is the point!) 16.fxg7 ♗xg7 17.0-0! 0-0! 18.♘d5 with an overwhelming advantage!

15...♘b6 16.♗d2



16...d5!

The only move! Black has to try this even if it’s losing, otherwise he will suffer the whole game in a passive position.

17.exd5 ♗b4

Thanks to the b3 inaccuracy, White has some problems because loses the stability of the c3 knight.

18.♖d1

White would like to play ♘e4, so the next move is forced. 18.0-0-0 allows 18...♕c7! 19.d6 ♗xd6 with mutual chances.

18...♗xc3 19.♗xc3 ♕xg5

19...0-0!? also came into consideration. Black has some different ideas, for instance ...e4 followed by ...♘xd5, or just ...♕xg5. Suddenly, the Black king is safe, while the White one has no safe shelter on the board.

20.♗xe5 ♖xc2!

20...0-0 was also tempting in order to bring the rook to e8, but suddenly after 21.♔f1! the Black king becomes vulnerable as well. ♖g1 is, rather unpleasantly for Black, coming next!

21.♗d4!

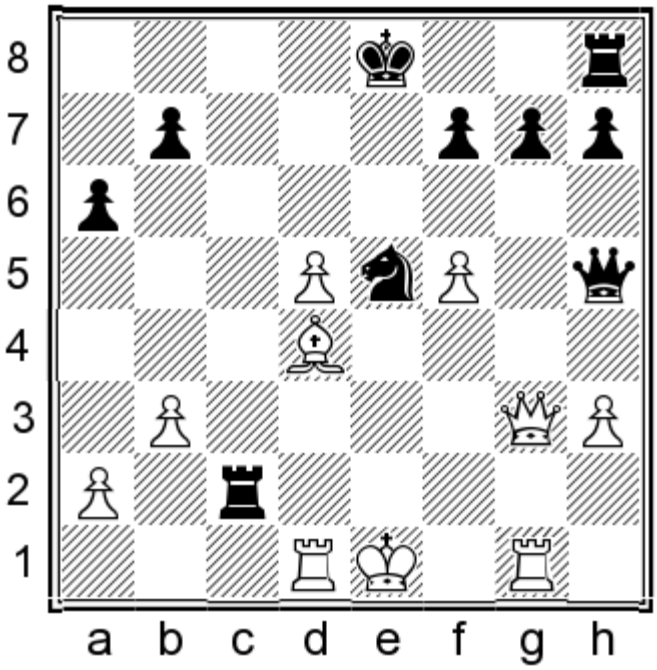
Creating the double threat of ♗xb6 and ♖g1. Now on 21.♔f1 ♖c1! is very strong. White has problems with the f5 and d5 pawns.

21...♘d7 22.♖g1 ♘e5!

A strong intermediate move! After 22...♕h4+ 23.♔f1 Black’s king becomes the weak one. White is pressing the g7-pawn and can consolidate his position with ♖g4! anytime. Despite having no pawns around the king, White’s pieces provide an excellent defense.

23.♕g3 ♕h5?

This is a blunder, which throws away the half point.



23...♕h4!! would have been a fantastic saving move! White has to force a draw because of the ♕e4 threat. 24.♕xh4 (*24.♗xe5 ♕e4+; 24.♔f1* loses to *24...♕h5!* There's a huge difference compared to the game. Both the d1 rook and the f5 pawn are hanging with check. *25.♕xe5+ ♔d7* Black wins.) 24...♘f3+ 25.♔f1 ♘h2+= with perpetual check to follow. 23...♕xg3+ 24.♖xg3 and the endgame is bad for Black after the g7 pawn falls.

24.♕xe5+ ♔d7 25.♖d2!

After this good defensive move, Black's heavy pieces are unable to create any serious threats.

25...♖e8

25...♖c1+ 26.♔f2+–

26.♕xe8+! ♔xe8 27.♖xc2 ♕h4+ 28.♗f2

White ends up with an extra piece and the d-pawn has huge power as well.

28...♕xh3 29.f6! g6

29...gxf6 is refuted by 30.♖c7! with a mating net around the Black king.

30.♖g3 ♕h1+ 31.♔e2 ♔d7

31...♕xd5 is poisoned. 32.♖e3++–

32.♖e3 ♕h5+ 33.♔e1 ♕h1+ 34.♔d2 ♕h2 35.♔c1

One single queen can't work wonders. The only problem for White was to make it through the last 5 moves of time-trouble without blundering. Then, his position will be automatically winning.

35...♕f4 36.♔b1

36.d6! was even stronger. 36...♕xd6 (*36...♔xd6 37.♗g3+*–) 37.♖d2+–

36...♕xf6 37.♖d3

White wants to advance his d-pawn.

37...♕f5 38.♖dd2 g5 39.d6 g4 40.♔c1

The last move of the time control. The end is near!

40...♕e5 41.♖c7+ ♔d8 42.♗b6 ♕a1+ 43.♔c2 ♕xa2+ 44.♔c3 ♕a1+ 45.♔b4

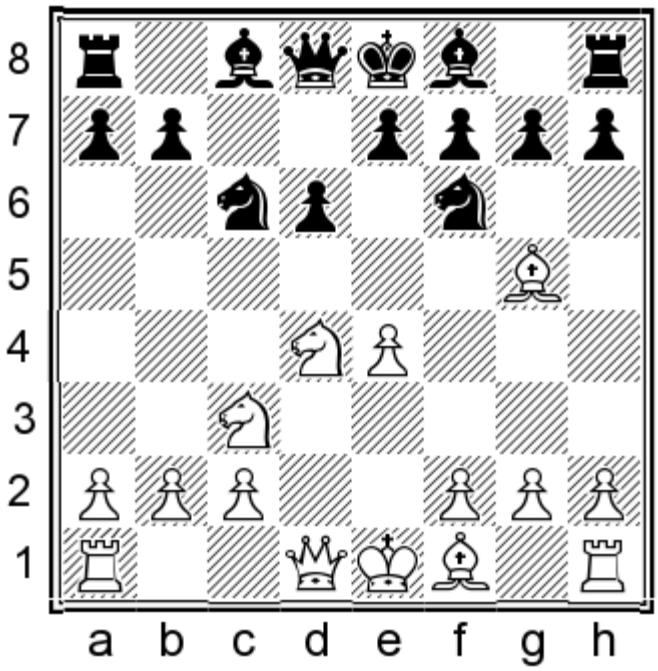
The queen has no more checks, so it's time to resign the game.

1–0

GAME 10
N. Grandelius (2572)
A. Ipatov (2587)
75th Tata Steel GpB
Wijk aan Zee NED (5.3)
17.01.2013, [B60]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

An extraordinary game with many nice tactical ideas.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗g5



6...g6

A very interesting surprise weapon. If White is not well-prepared, the initiative might quickly pass to Black.

7.♗xf6 exf6

Black's healthy pawn structure has been destroyed, but he gained the bishop pair as compensation. Black's idea is to play ...♗g7, ...0-0 and ...f5, getting rid of the doubled-pawns and opening the diagonal for the g7 bishop.

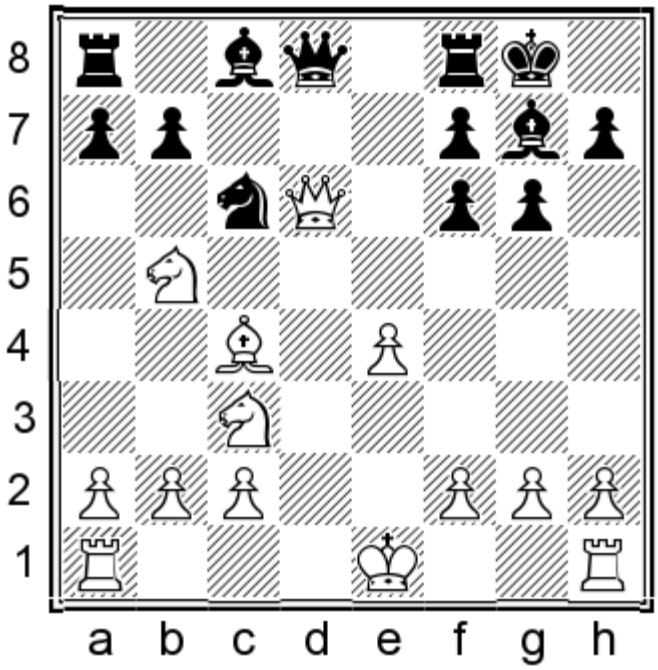
8.♗c4

8.♗b5 ♗d7 9.♕d2 ♗g7 10.0-0-0 is another critical line from the opening's point of view.

8...♗g7 9.♘db5

White chooses the most direct way to punish Black for his opening choice. Black has no choice; he must sacrifice the d6-pawn and try to look for counterplay.

9...0-0 10.♕xd6

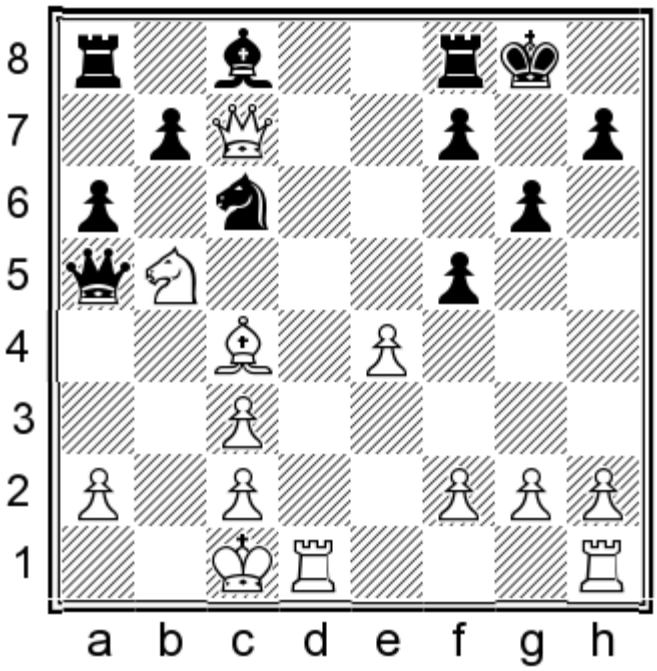


10...f5!

This is the right move, as Black must activate the bishop pair. We are still at the beginning of theory.

11.0-0-0 ♕b6!

Black tries to win a tempo in order to develop the initiative by attacking the f2 pawn. Mainly 11...♕a5 was played before, but the text move seems to be stronger. The young Carlsen showed in a blitz game how to get an advantage for White. 12.♕c7! ♗xc3 13.bxc3 a6 Black seems to be all right, but a brilliant move causes real problems.

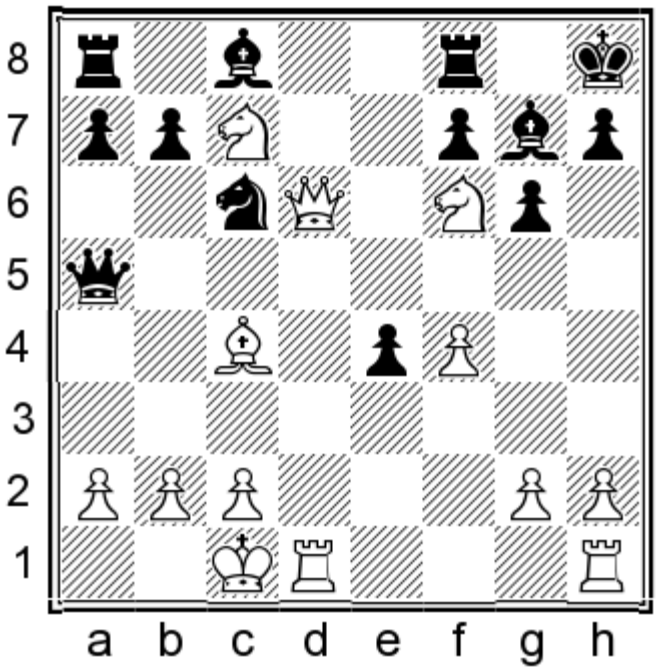


14.♖d8!! Of all the hanging pieces, Black can only take the queen, but it also leads to a worse endgame. 14...♕xc7 (*14...♖xd8 15.♕xf7+ ♔h8 16.♕f6#*) 15.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 16.♘xc7 ♖a7 17.♗d3 Carlsen-Gurevich, blitz 2006.

12.f4 fxe4 13.♘d5

13.♘xe4 ♗f5 would yield more than enough compensation for Black.

13...♕a5 14.♘f6+ ♔h8 15.♘c7



Only this move is a novelty, but probably it still existed in Black's preparation, as this is the computer's recommendation.

15...♗e6!!

An excellent decision. The game becomes incredibly sharp and entertaining. 15...♖b8 allows 16.♘ce8!! An unusual idea, after which White takes the strong bishop and the king becomes vulnerable. A threat could be ♘xg7 ♔xg7 ♖d5, and on ♕b6, ♘h5 gxh5 ♖g5 ♔h8 ♕f6 mate.

16.♗xe6 fxe6

16...♖ad8! would have been even stronger. With 17.♗d7 White preserves his extra piece, but the attack seems to be more than dangerous. 17...♕xa2 (e3 threatens, with ♕a1 mate) 18.♘cd5 ♕a1+ 19.♔d2 ♕xb2 White could hardly withstand the pressure in a practical game.

17.♘xa8 ♕xa2!

17...♖xa8? is too slow. 18.♕xe6 and White protects his a2 pawn and enjoys being an exchange up.

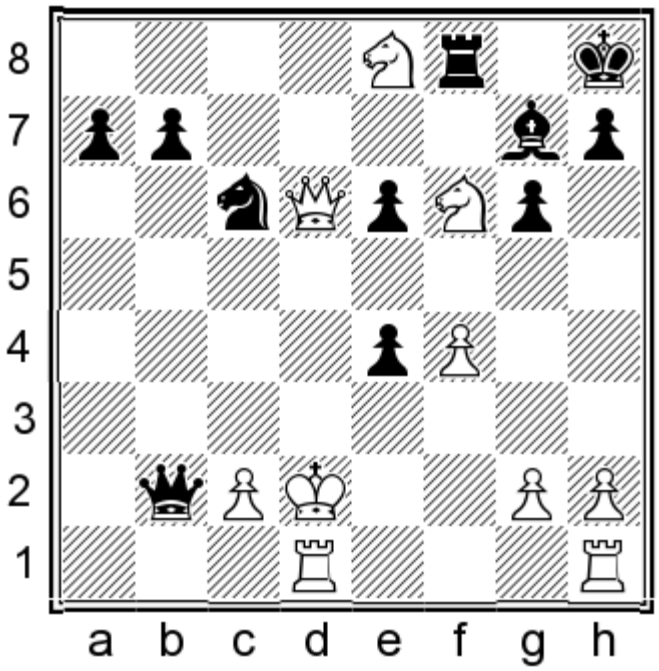
18.♘c7

Grandelius takes up the challenge and keeps all his pieces on the board. Probably, most players would have preferred 18.♕a3 when Black is forced to trade queens. 18...♕xa3 19.bxa3 ♗xf6 20.♘c7 when White's prospects are slightly better.

18...♕a1+! 19.♔d2 ♕xb2

Black is a rook down at the moment, but there are many threats in the air, like ...♖d8 or simply ...♖xf6, when, even materially, Black is fine.

20.♘ce8!



20.♘xe6 ♖xf6 The knight protects against both queen checks on the back-rank.

20...♘d4!?

The most ambitious move. Objectively, Black should have forced a draw by playing 20...♖xe8! although the point of

the sacrifice is only clear for computers. 21.♘xe8 ♗c3+ 22.♔e3 ♗b4!! This is extremely strong. It frees the c3 square for the queen, with tempo. Now White is the one who needs to find an only move. 23.♕d7! (23.♕xe6 leads to a forced mate. 23...♗c5+ 24.♔xe4 (24.♔d2 ♕d4+! 25.♔e1 (*25.♔c1 ♗a3+ 26.♔b1 ♕b2#*) 25...♕f2#) 24...♕xc2+ 25.♔f3 ♕f2+ 26.♔e4 Black has several ways to win, but the most precise is 26...♕xg2+ 27.♔d3 ♘b4+ 28.♔c4 ♕c2+ 29.♔b5 a6+ 30.♔a5 b6+ 31.♕xb6 ♕a2# This is the end of the journey.) 23...♗c5+ 24.♔xe4 ♕xc2+ 25.♕d3! This is the reason why the queen had to go to d7. Now Black doesn't have more than a perpetual check. 25...♕xg2+ 26.♕f3 ♕c2+ 27.♕d3 ♕g2+=

21.♘xg7

The g7-knight becomes the key piece in White's defense. It controls the f5-square against the knight checks...

21...♖c8?

Black is lost after this move, but of course, in a practical game things are not clear at all. 21...♕xc2+ 22.♔e3+– is not enough. Here is an example of the usefulness of the g7-knight, ♘f5 is not mate. 21...♔xg7 was the best. White can only get a slightly better endgame after all. 22.♕c7+ ♔xf6 23.♖b1 Probably Ipatov stopped calculating here, because if the queen moves, ♕e5 and ♖b7 finishes the game. However, he has 23...♘b3+! 24.♔e2 ♘d4+ 25.♔f2 ♕xc2+ 26.♕xc2 ♘xc2 27.♖hc1 with a small edge. 21...♖xf6 Now the strongest is the cold-blooded 22.♖he1! ♔xg7 23.♕c7+ ♖f7 24.♕c3±

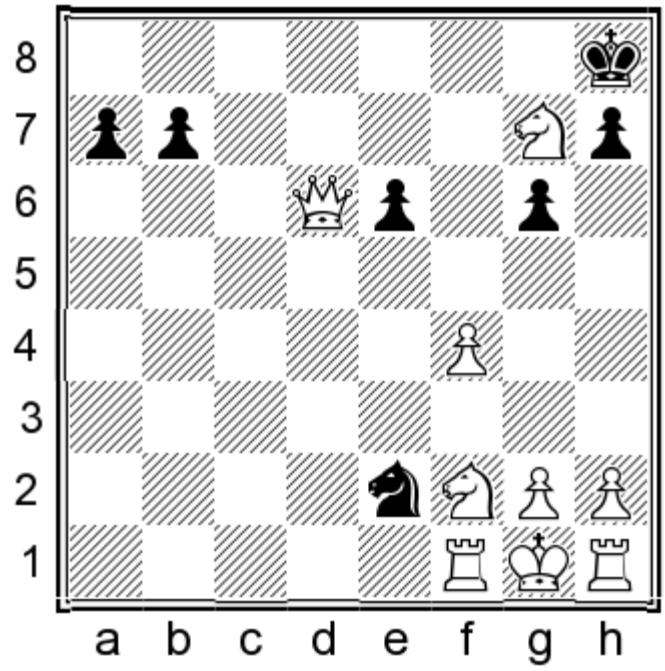
22.♔e3!?

This is the human move! The machine suggests 22.♘xe4!! ♖xc2+ 23.♔e1! It looks really suspicious, but Black has no real threats. 23...♖e2+ 24.♔f1 The checks are over, and Black has to sacrifice. 24...♖f2+ 25.♘xf2 ♕b5+

(*25...♕e2+ 26.♔g1+*– The rook is protected.)

26.♘d3! and game over.

(However, not *26.♔g1??* because of *26...♘e2+! 27.♔f1 ♘g3+ 28.♔g1 ♕f1+! 29.♖xf1 ♘e2#*



with an amazing final position. Black is basically a full chess-set down, but he gives mate with a single knight!)

22...♕c3+

22...♘xc2+ 23.♔xe4 ♖c4+ 24.♔f3+– wins for White.

23.♖d3

This is the human decision, once more. However, the computer is not afraid again, and plays 23.♔f2! e3+ 24.♔g3! (*24.♔g1??* would change the final outcome *24...♕xc2* and White gets mated, for instance, after *25.h3 ♕f2+ 26.♔h2 ♘f3#*) 24...e2+ 25.♖d3 e1=♕+ 26.♖xe1 ♕xe1+ 27.♔h3+– White is out of the danger zone.

23...exd3 24.♕xd4

White is two knights up and Black can only get one back if he trades queens, but it would lead to a lost endgame. So, he must try a desperate attack.

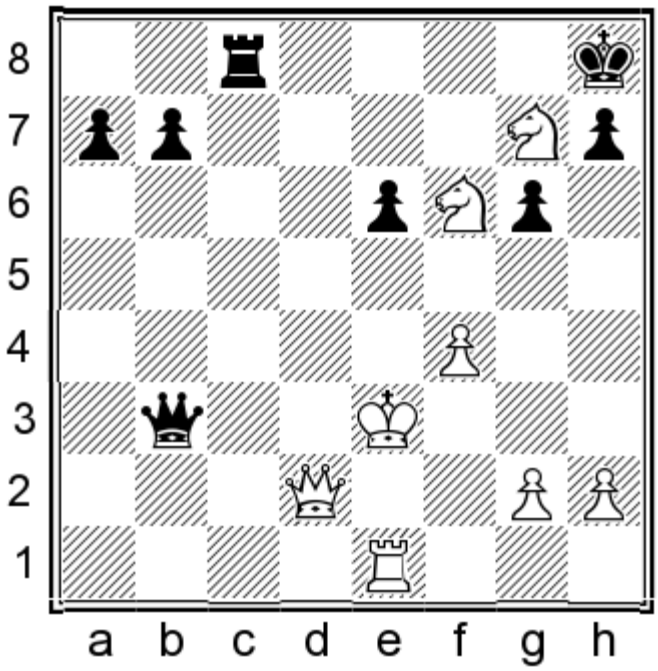
24...♕xc2

24...♕xd4+ 25.♔xd4 ♔xg7 26.♘e4 dxc2 27.♖c1+– White has a technical win.

25.♖e1!

Preventing ♕e2 and activating the rook.

25...d2 26.♕xd2 ♕b3+



26...♖c3+ 27.♔e2+– White is safe.

27.♔e4!!

White is not afraid. Excellent calculation!

27...♖c4+ 28.♔e5 ♖c5+

28...♕b5+ is refuted by 29.♔xe6 ♖c6+ 30.♔f7!+– and White is ready to cover the checks from e7 and e6.

29.♔d6!

There is no way back!

29...♕b6+ 30.♔e7 ♖c7+ 31.♘d7!

And the king has found its shelter. The game is over.

31...♔xg7 32.♖xe6 ♕c5+ 33.♕d6!

Quite a picturesque position! Black should exchange the queens, but that would also be a kind of resignation. Other moves lead to mate, and the Black king gets it.

33...♕c4 34.♕e5+ ♔g8 35.♔f6!

♖e8 is the threat.

35...♖c6 36.♕b8+ ♖c8 37.♖e8+

What an amazing game!

1–0

GAME 11
P. Harikrishna (2688)
Z. Efimenko (2689)
Schachbundesliga 2012/2013 (8.2)
03.02.2013, [C84]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

Despite the tactical oversight in time-trouble by Black, we're faced with a really high-quality game.

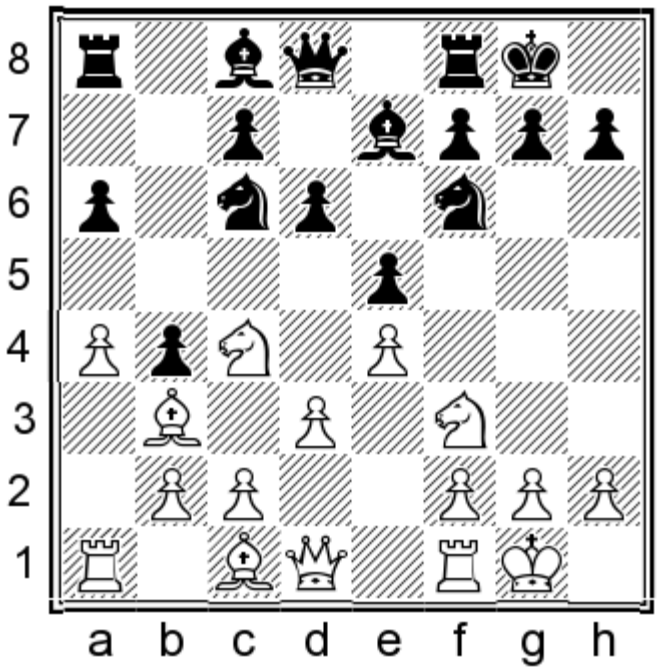
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3

Black decided to go for the Ruy Lopez, while White chose the nowadays very popular 6.d3 system.

6...b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.a4 b4 9.♘bd2 d6

9...♗c5 is an alternative, which was introduced by Aronian last year.

10.♘c4



10...♗e6

We are in a known position, where White usually plays c3, ♖e1 and d4 at an opportune moment, but Harikrishna tries another plan, which was recently used by Grischuk.

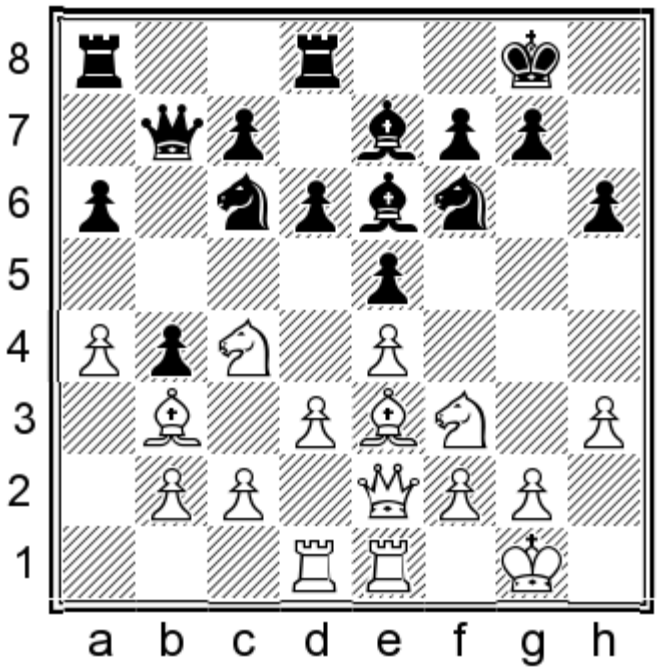
11.h3 h6 12.♗e3 ♕c8

After many different attempts, the Black players found the ♕c8-♖d8 setup for Black in the positions with c3, which gave them satisfactory games. He prepares a ...d5 break and sometimes the sacrifices with ♗xh3 might be annoying.

13.♖e1 ♖d8 14.♕e2 ♕b7

The afore-mentioned Grischuk game continued with 14...a5 15.♖ad1 ♕a6 16.♔h1 ♗f8 17.♕f1 and after long maneuvering it ended in draw, Grischuk-Inarkiev, 2012. Of course, there are plenty of plans in such positions, and Harikirshna has definitely worked out something in his home preparation.

15.♖ad1



15...♘d7

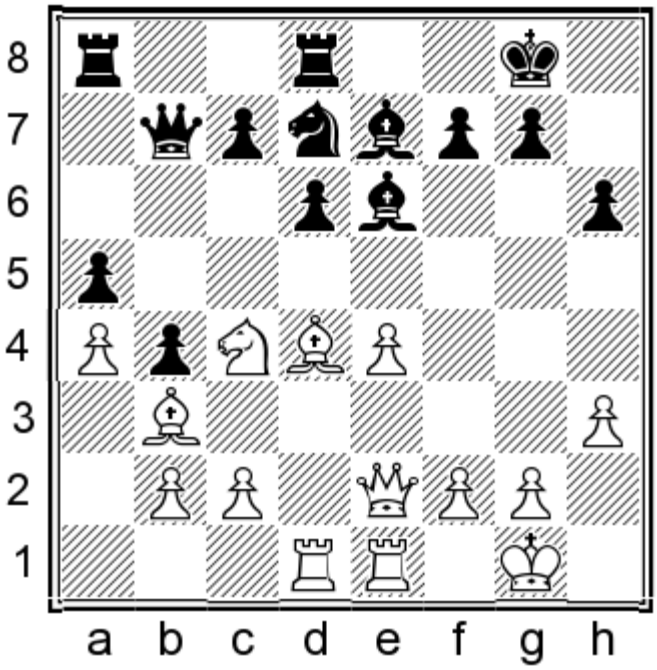
I don't like this move. It reduces the pressure on the e4-pawn and White can effectively take advantage of this. The standard 15...♗f8 was better in my opinion, and now the difference is that if White plays 16.d4 exd4 17.♘xd4 ♘xd4 18.♗xd4 then 18...♕xe4! seems to work and leads to an equal endgame, e.g. 19.♕xe4 ♘xe4 20.♖xe4 d5 21.♖xe6 dxc4 22.♖ee1 cxb3 23.cxb3 After the simplifications, there is no advantage left.

16.d4!

This was the whole idea of White's setup. He's opening the center and his pieces are better prepared for a concrete play, while Black's are still in the maneuvering phase of the game.

16...exd4 17.♘xd4 ♘xd4 18.♗xd4 a5

Black had to prevent the ♘a5-c6 threat.



Going for the e4-pawn with 18...c5 doesn't work out well. 19.♗e3 The d6-pawn has become a weakness. 19...♕xe4 20.♘xd6 ♗xd6 21.♖xd6 White is better because Black can't lock in the bishop with 21...c4 because 22.♖d4!± wins the pawn.;

18...♗f6? is the principled move to exchange the strong bishop, but it allows the concrete 19.♘a5! and Black must let the knight to jump to c6.

19.♖d3!

A very nice plan, lifting the rook to the 3rd rank in order to be able to switch it to the attack at any time.

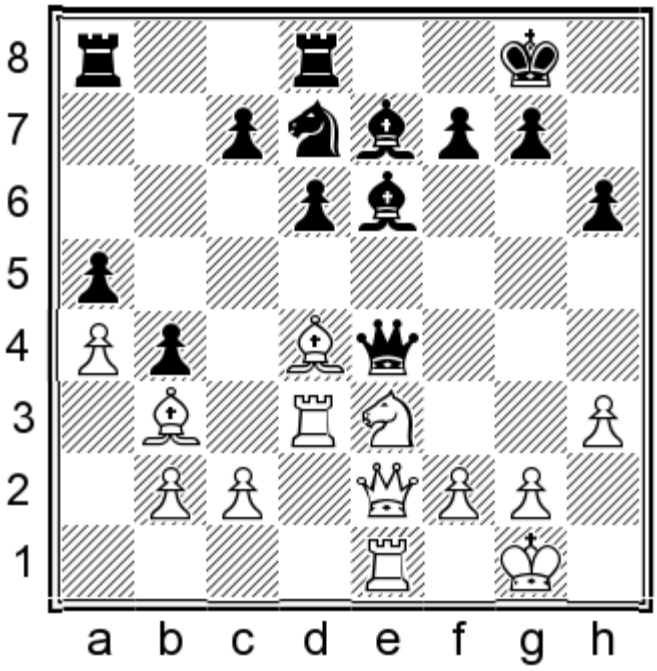
19...♕c6

19...♗f6 had concrete problems again as 20.♗xf6 ♘xf6 21.e5! seems to be very strong, and suddenly the a5-pawn is the main problem in Black's position. 21...dxe5 22.♘xa5! ♕b6 23.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 24.♘c4±

20.♘e3!

White wants to transfer his knight to d5 or f5, which would be very nice of course, but what happens if Black grabs the e4 pawn? 20.♖g3 is not so dangerous yet because of 20...♗f6!

20...♕xe4



20...♗xb3 is met with the intermediate moves 21.♘f5! ♗f8 22.♗xg7!+– and the attack is decisive with ♕g4 or ♖g3.

21.♘d5! ♗xd5

21...♕xe2 is bad in view of 22.♘xe7+ ♔f8 23.♖xe2 ♔xe7 24.♖de3 White gets a big advantage, since 24...♘e5 runs into (*24...♘f8 25.♗xg7*) 25.f4±

22.♕f1!

A very nice discovered attack on the queen. White wants to capture one of the bishops, either on d5 or e7, so the g2-pawn had to be protected. 22.♕xe4 doesn't give any advantage after 22...♗xe4 23.♖xe4 ♘e5!=

22...♕f5

22...♕xe1!? was objectively the best move 23.♕xe1 ♗xb3 24.cxb3 ♗f6 Black tries to create a fortress. It's hard to say if White is going to have any chance to break through, since Black has no weaknesses. 22...♕xg2+? 23.♕xg2 ♗xg2 24.♖xe7 and White penetrates on the 7th rank.

23.g4!

White is hunting down the d5-bishop! He'll succeed in taking it, but at the cost of a weakened kingside.

23...♕g5 24.f4!

The queen can't protect it anymore.

24...♕h4 25.♗xd5

This was the position that Harikrishna had to foresee before playing 20.♘e3! Very deep calculation and understanding of the position. White is a pawn down, but the active bishop pair and the misplacement of the Black queen gives more than enough compensation.

25...c6

With this small combo Black temporarily activates his rook.

26.♗xc6 ♖ac8 27.♗d5 ♖xc2 28.♗b3!

Of course, such an active rook must be sent packing from the 2nd rank.

28...♖cc8

We are now in a critical position. White has two tempting ways to continue, but Harikrishna decides to repeat once to approach the time-control, and then tries one of the critical moves.

29.♗f2 ♕f6 30.♗d4

30.♕e2!? was the alternative, which also looks very dangerous. 30...♗f8 (*30...♖e8* moves into the deadly pin *31.♖e3*) 31.♗d4! ♕xf4 is the only move. It seems to be a blunder, but... (The difference is that after 31...♕h4 32.♗xf7+! works! 32...♔h8 (*32...♔xf7 33.♕e6#*) 33.♗d5± with a big advantage.) 32.♖f1 ♖c1! is another only move, but White gets the advantage after 33.♗d1! ♕g5 (*33...♖xd1* is only better for White.) 34.♗e3! wins the rook.

30...♕h4 31.g5!

The e7-bishop is attacked and g6 is another unpleasant threat.

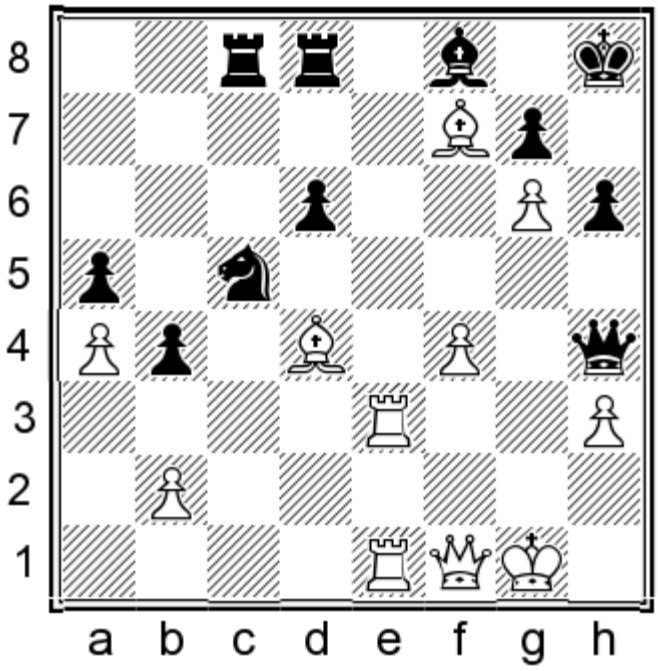
31...♗f8

On 31...♖e8 32.g6 is more effective.

32.g6 ♔h8 33.♗xf7?!

This is the only mistake by White in the game. To implant a pawn on f7 could have been very dangerous as White would always threaten with ♖e8, and the g-file is also opened for a potential attack against the g7 pawn. 33.gxf7 ♘c5 34.♗xc5 Black has no good recapture, White enters on e8 in both cases 34...dxc5 (*34...♖xc5 35.♖e8*±) 35.♖xd8± and ♖e8 next.

33...♘c5! 34.♖de3



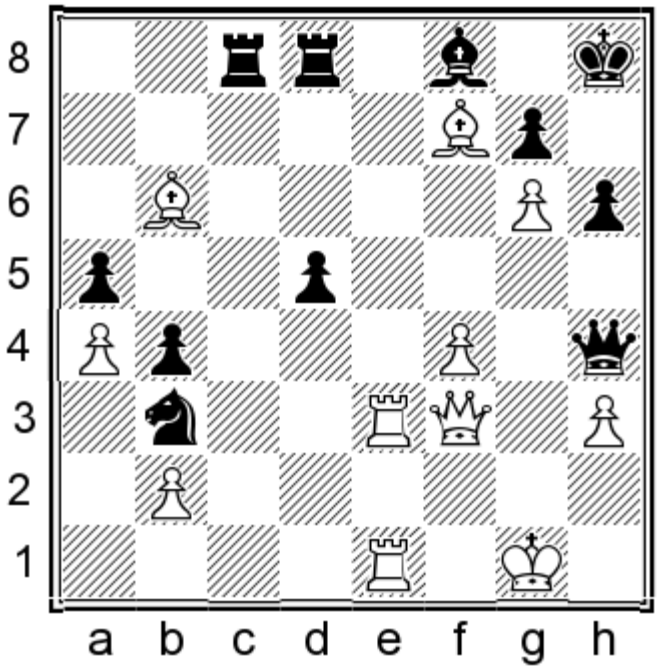
34...d5!

Black creates an e4 outpost for his knight, which would completely neutralize the rooks. White has to fight against it.

35.♕f3! ♘b3!

A nice tactical fight is about to start. Both players were in time-trouble at this moment and Black is going to blunder soon...The knight is indirectly protected because the e1 rook is hanging in that case. Now on 35...♘e4 36.♗xd5 was the idea.

36.♗b6!



36...♖d6?

This is the decisive mistake, but it was very hard to calculate all the complications with only 30 seconds on the clock. 36...♗c5!! was the right move 37.♗xc5 (*37.♗xd8 ♕xe1+!* is the whole point!) 37...♘xc5 and Black is fine 38.♗xd5 ♘d3! Black makes use of the hanging e1-rook again and overtakes the initiative.

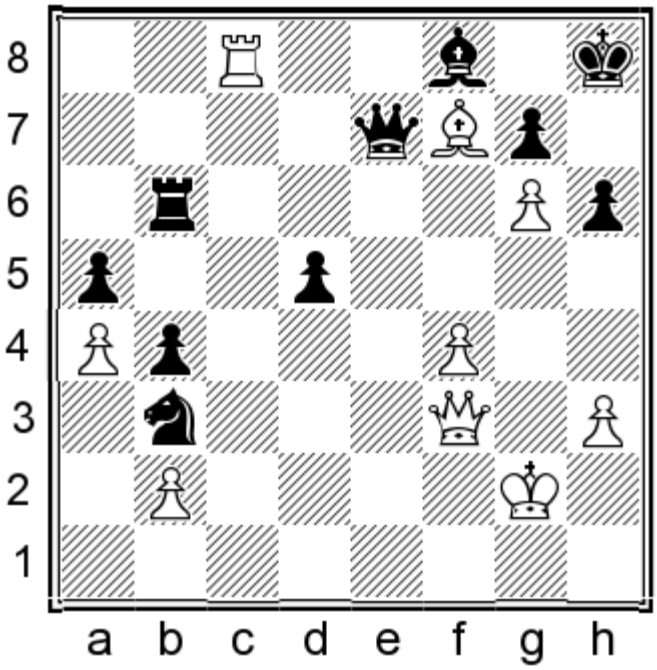
37.♖e8!!

The game is over. White attacks the b3 knight and creates deadly threats on the back-rank.

37...♖xb6 38.♖xc8! ♕xe1+ 39.♔g2

Black has only one move to protect the bishop, which is hanging with mate.

39...♕e7



40.♕e3!!

This pretty deflection of the queen on the last move of time-trouble finishes the game.

40...♖xg6+

40...♕d6 41.♕xb6!+–; 40...♕xe3 41.♖xf8#

41.♗xg6 ♕f6 42.f5 1–0

GAME 12
D. Fridman (2667)
A. Naiditsch (2716)
1st GRENKE Chess Classic

Baden Baden GER (6)
13.02.2013, [E97]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Just yesterday I managed to win a nice attacking game against my colleague from the National Team.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♗e3

8.d5 ♘e7 We are at the beginning of a huge Classical King's Indian line where both sides have a lot of different plans and ideas.

8...♘g4 9.♗g5 f6 10.♗h4

10.♗c1 f5 leads to complex play where recently Black has had good results. For example 11.♗g5 ♕d7 12.exf5 (*12.d5 ♘d4*∞) 12...exd4 13.f6 (*13.♘d5 ♖xf5 14.h3 ♘ge5 15.♘xe5 dxe5 16.♗g4 ♕f7 17.♗xf5 ♗xf5*⩱) 13...♘xf6 14.♘xd4 ♘e4 15.♘xe4 ♘xd4 16.♗d3 ♘e6 17.♕c2 ♘xg5 18.♘xg5 ♕g4 19.♘e4 ♗d7 20.♘c3 ♖ae8 21.♗e4 c6 22.♖ad1 ♗e6 23.♘e2 ♗f5 24.♗xf5 ♖xe2 25.♗xg4 ♖xc2 1/2–1/2 Le Quang Liem—T. Gharamian, Belfort FRA.

10...g5 11.♗g3 ♘h6 12.dxe5

12.d5 ♘e7 Black is going to push ...f5 next. After exf5, White will get the e4 square but that's not enough to get a clear advantage because, thanks to his active pieces, Black will have good chances to create an initiative on the kingside.

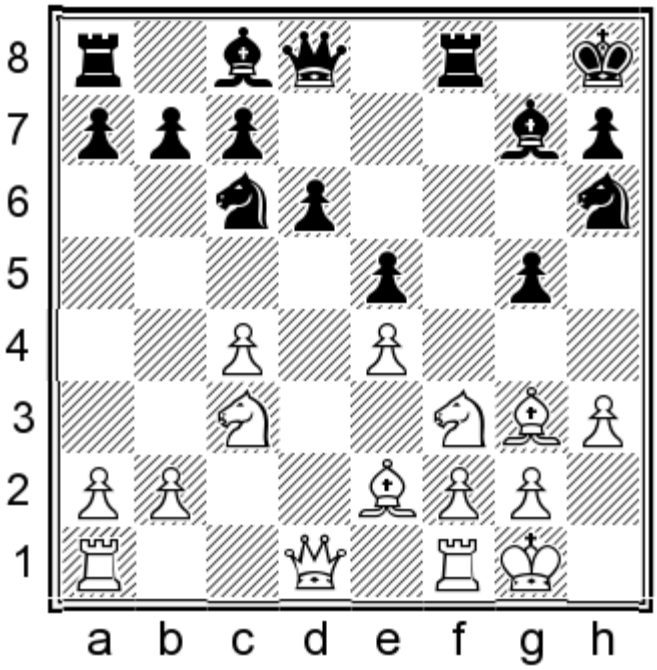
12...fxe5

This is the most fighting move. Daniel is a very solid player, so I thought I would get better chances in an unclear position. 12...dxe5 13.♕b3 ♕e7 14.♖ad1 ♖b8 15.♘d5 ♕f7 16.♕a3 a5 17.♖d2 ♗e6 18.h3 ♖fe8 19.♗d1 ♗f8 20.♕e3 g4 21.♘h4 gxh3 22.f4 hxg2 23.♖xg2∞ 1/2–1/2 I. Ivanisevic–N. Djukic/Porto Carras GRE.

13.h3!?

Probably the idea of this move is to play ♘h2, looking for an exchange of the light squared bishops in order to play on the light squares. The problem is that Black can push g4, when the White king will not be very safe.

13...♔h8



I was not sure whether to play ♔h8 or ♘f7. 13...♘f7!? with the idea of preparing ...♘d4 and after ♘xd4 exd4 ♘b5, Black will have ...c5. 14.c5 dxc5 15.♗c4⩲.

14.c5

A very logical move by White. Now if I manage to put the knight on d4, I will not have the ...c7-c5 move to support my knight's position.

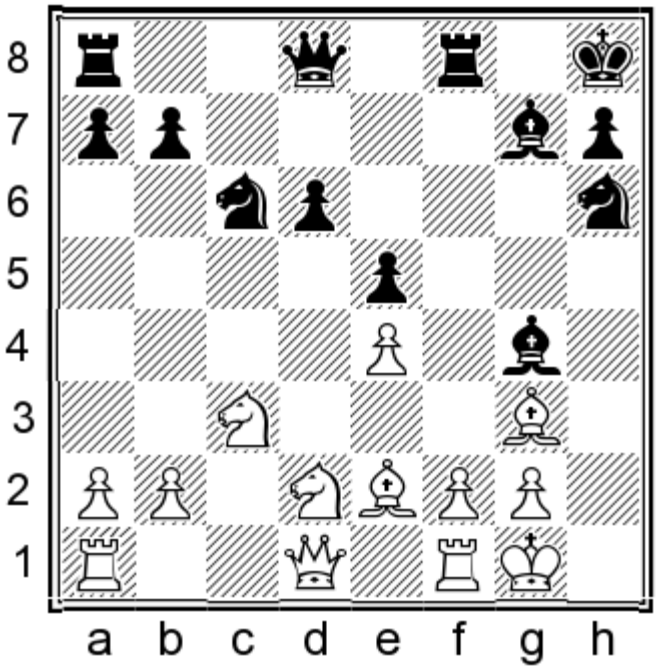
14...g4

14...dxc5 15.♕xd8 ♖xd8 16.♘xg5 ♘d4∞. Even here, with the strong knight on d4, Black should not be worse — although this position is very difficult to evaluate.

15.hxg4 ♗xg4 16.cxd6 cxd6

I think this is the critical moment. During the game I was mainly calculating 17.♘d5 ♗xf3 18.♗xf3 ♘d4 with a very unclear position. My main problem is the knight on h6, so if I have enough time to get it to g5, Black should be doing pretty well, but in order to do that I need 2 full moves which gives White time to create something.

17.♘d2



17...♗c8

A nice move. Of course, Black should not exchange the light-squared bishops and my knight is going to g5. A direct attack would lead nowhere: 17...♕g5 18.♗xg4 (*18.♘c4 ♘d4∞*) 18...♘xg4 19.♘f3 ♕h5 20.♘h2! and White is better. 17...♗e6 18.♗c4∞

18.♘c4 ♘d4 19.♘e3 ♘f7

Finally my knight is getting into the game.

20.♘c2

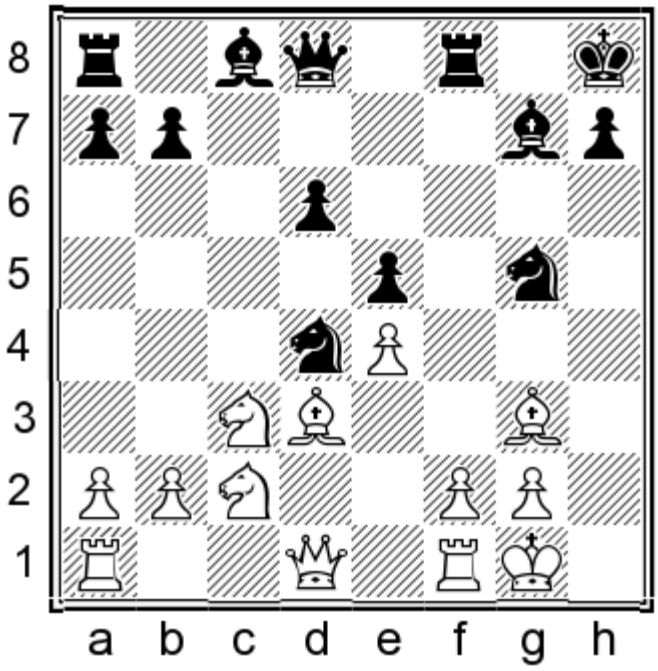
I did not like this move by Daniel. White's knight should be placed on d5 and not on c2.

20...♘g5

20...♘xe2+ 21.♕xe2 ♕g5 22.♖ad1 h5

21.♗d3?!

White saves the bishop and prepares ♘xd4-exd4-♘b5, but now comes



21...♘df3+!

21...♘de6 was the other option I was considering during the game, but ...♘df3 was just too tempting :)

22.gxf3 ♕d7!

An important move. Now I am preparing to take on f3 and give checkmate with ♕h3. 22...♘xf3+ 23.♔g2 ♘h4+ 24.♔g1 and Black should repeat moves because other options are worse. 24...♕g5 25.♗e2 ♗h3 26.♔h2 ♗xf1 27.♕xf1±

23.♗e2

23.♘e1 ♖f6→ 24.♕a4 ♕f7 with a decisive attack. White can't avoid mate on the h-file. (*24...♕h3* Less accurate because the queen on e8 can create some problems for Black. *25.♕e8+ ♗f8*)

23...♖f6

This was the key move of a fairly simple idea — just to give mate on the h-file!

24.♘d5!

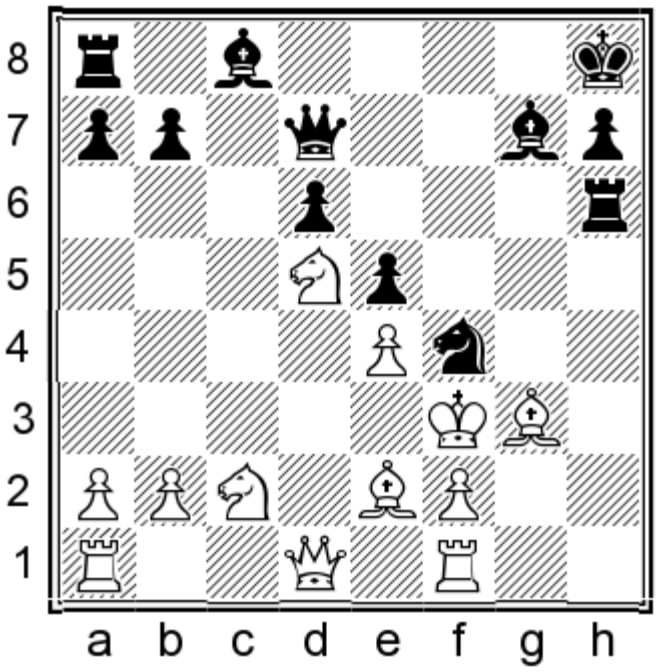
The only move. 24.♖e1 The idea to escape via the f1 square does not help either. 24...♘h3+ Here Black has quite a few choices to finish the game. One of them is 25.♔f1 ♘f4 26.♔g1 ♖h6 27.♗f1 ♘h3+ 28.♔g2 ♕f7! A silent but deadly move. ...♕h5 next with ...♘f4 and mate can't be avoided by White. It doesn't help to play 24.♘e3 ♕h3 25.♘g4 ♗xg4 26.fxg4 ♖af8! followed by the lethal ...♖h6 next.

24...♖h6 25.f4 ♘h3+ 26.♔g2

Here I had 2 options...

26...exf4

26...♘xf4+ 27.♔f3



The position looks pretty unclear from a human point of view, and I was calculating the main ...♖h3, but the computer gives an incredible win: 27...♖h2!! An amazing move! White can’t defend against mate. Black wants to play ...♗h6 next and 28.♗xh2 ♕h3+ 29.♗g3 ♘g2!! followed by ...♗g4 mate. But how to find this over the board? I don’t know :)

27.♗h2

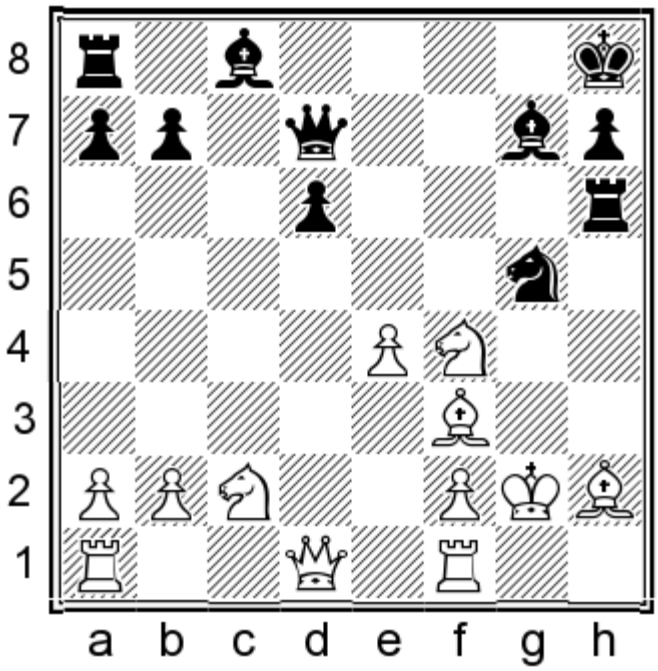
A very human move by Daniel but, as usual, the computer finds a better defense. 27.♘d4 was the only way to go for White. 27...♕f7 (*27...fxg3 28.fxg3 ♘g5 29.♘f5 ♘xe4∞* During the game I thought I should be better here, but in fact things are far from clear.) 28.♖c1 fxg3 29.fxg3 ♘f2 30.♖xf2 ♖h2+ 31.♔xh2 ♕xf2+ 32.♔h1 ♗xd4 33.♕f1 What a defense by White! 33...♕xf1+ 34.♖xf1 ♗d7 Thanks to the pair of bishops, Black is slightly better, but White has good drawing chances.

27...f3+ 28.♗xf3

28.♔xf3 ♘g5+ 29.♔e3 ♖xh2–+ Black has a free attack now.

28...♘g5 29.♘f4

The only move to take control of the h3 square.



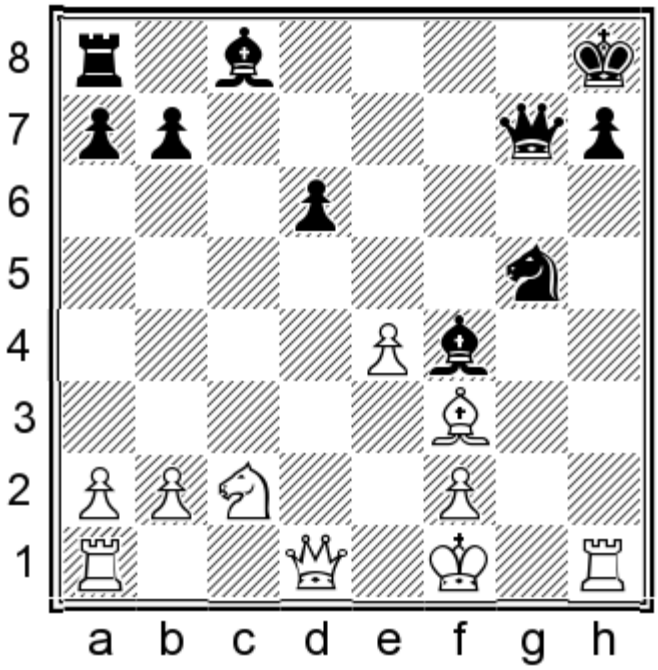
29.♗g4 ♕xg4+ 30.♕xg4 ♗xg4–+;

29.♗g3 ♕h3+ 30.♔g1 ♗g4 31.♗g2 ♗xd1 32.♗xh3 ♗f3 33.♗g2 ♘h3+ 34.♔h1 ♘f4+–+

29...♖xh2+ 30.♔xh2 ♗e5

Not the most precise. 30...♕f7! would finish the game quickly. 31.♔g2 ♕xf4 32.♖h1 ♗d7 followed by ...♖g8 with a mating attack.

31.♔g2 ♗xf4 32.♖h1 ♕g7 33.♔f1



33...♗e6

There was no need for 33...♗h3+ 34.♖xh3 ♘xh3 35.♗g4 ♘g5 36.♗f5

34.♘d4

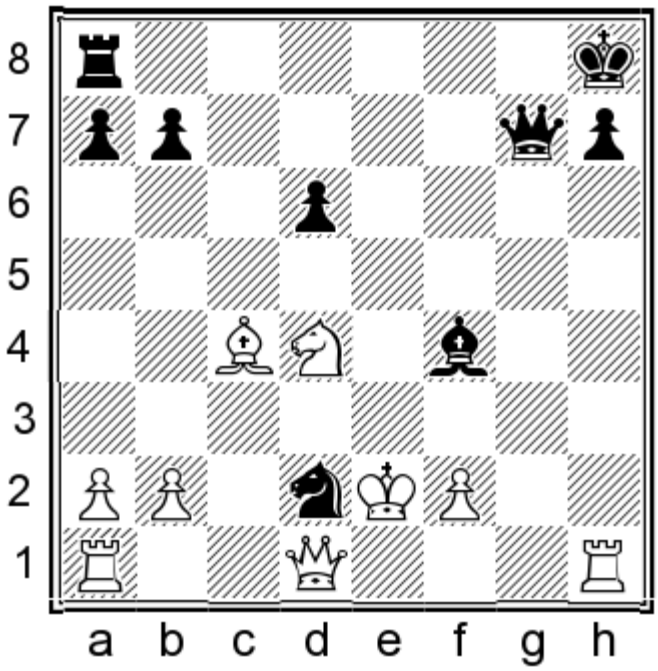
Daniel just had a minute on the clock, which makes his position very difficult to play. Objectively, Black has a very strong initiative for the exchange.

34...♗c4+ 35.♗e2 ♘xe4 36.♗xc4?

The decisive mistake! Now White is losing by force. The only way to try to survive was 36.♖g1 ♕f6 37.♘f3 to prevent ♘d2 37...♗xe2+ (*37...♕xb2 38.♕d4+ ♕xd4 39.♘xd4∞* Black still has the initiative but of course, without the queen, it's not the same as before.) 38.♕xe2 ♖e8 39.♕b5 ♖f8→ with a strong attack.;

36.♘f3 ♘xf2–+ That's why White needed to play 36.♖g1 first.

36...♘d2+ 37.♔e2



37.♔e1 ♕xd4 38.♕h5 h6–+

37...d5!

A very nice move, especially during time trouble. Daniel had prepared a nice trap: 37...♕xd4? 38.♖xh7+! ♔xh7 39.♕h1+ and suddenly my own king is under attack. 39...♔g6 40.♖g1+ ♗g5 41.♗d3+ ♔f6 42.♕h5 ♕e5+ 43.♔d1 ♖g8 44.♖g4 White is a piece down but has practical chances.

38.♕c2

Now on 38.♗xd5 ♕xd4 White has no saving check on d3 with his bishop.

38...♖e8+ 39.♔d1 ♘xc4

The game is over.

40.♕c3

Here I had a lot of winning moves, but the move in the game seemed to be the safest one.

40...♖e4 41.♘f5 ♘xb2+ 42.♔c2 ♖e2+ 43.♔b3 ♕xc3+ 44.♔xc3 ♗e5+ 45.♘d4

45.♔b3 ♘c4–+

45...♖e4

and we have reached a rook endgame 2 pawns down for White, and zero hopes of him making a draw. I was very happy when Daniel gave me a handshake — a nice game to win! :)

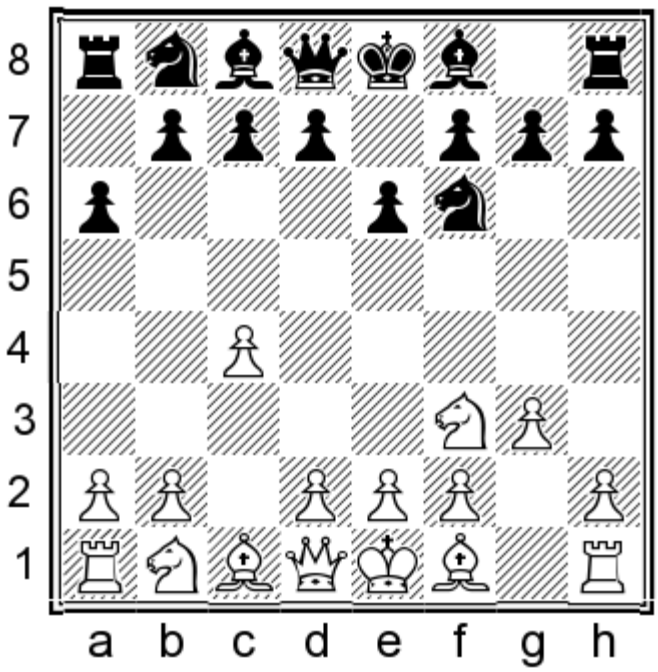
0–1

GAME 13
A. Giri (2730)
M. Bartel (2635)
Schachbundesliga 2012/2013 (11.1)
16.03.2013, [A13]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

A very interesting tactical fight where White succeeded in out-calculating his opponent.

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 a6

Bartel likes this kind of slightly unusual system. Black intends to play b5 and fianchetto his bishop. White's next move is aimed against this plan and is basically a novelty.



4.e3!?

It is quite funny that after g3, White now plays e3, but in modern chess we cannot be surprised about anything. White delays ♗g2 to avoid the ...b5 plan and intends to finish his development on the queenside first. 4.♗g2 b5 is the start of the main lines.

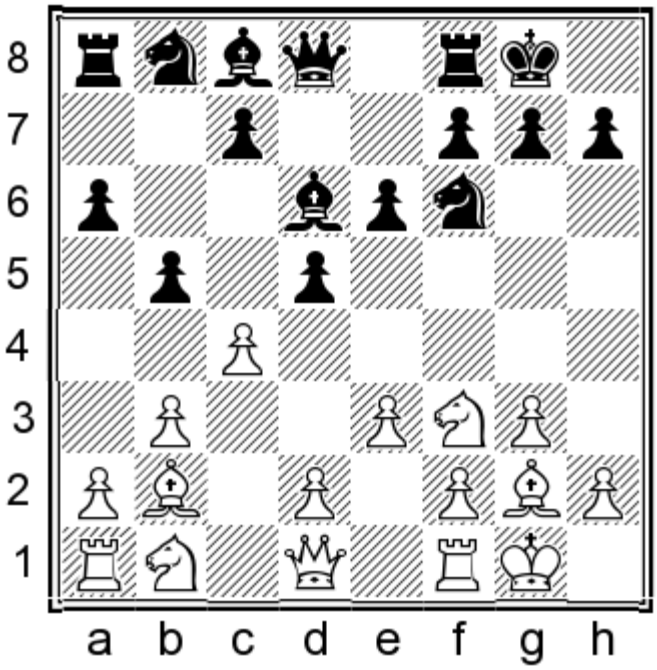
4...d5 5.b3!

White needs to protect the c4 pawn as he wants to put his bishop on g2. The dark-squared bishop will also be excellently placed on the other long diagonal.

5...♗d6 6.♗b2 0-0 7.♗g2

White finally plays ♗g2. He waits to decide where to develop the b1-knight according to the forthcoming arrangement of Black's pieces.

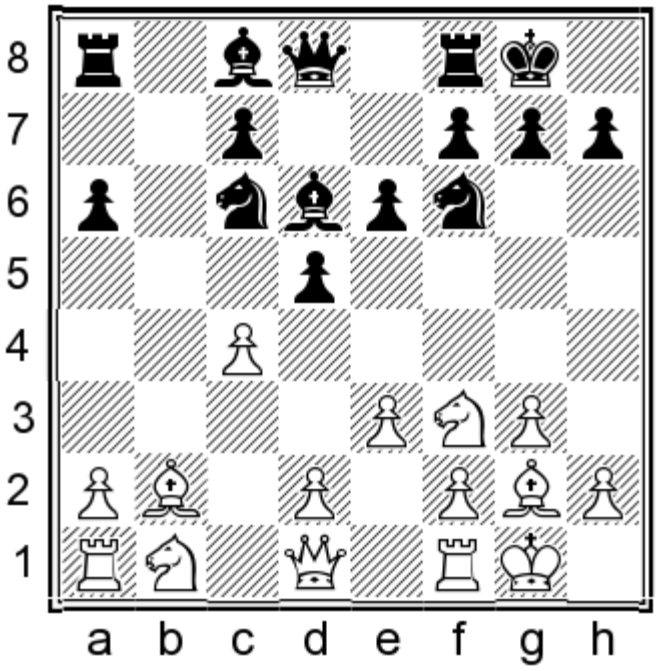
7...b5 8.0-0



8...bxc4

It is not logical to release the tension if it's not forced, although White's position was already preferable. After 8...♗b7 9.cxd5 exd5 White can choose between two tempting ideas: 10.♗xf6!? I like this move a lot. White makes use of the c5 hole. (*10.♕c2 ♘bd7 11.♘d4!?* is another typical plan in such situations. White wants to settle his knight on f5 and if Black plays ...g6, the b2-bishop becomes even stronger on the a1–h8 diagonal.) 10...♕xf6 11.d4! The best move for Black would be to retreat the b5 pawn to b6, but of course, it is not possible! To get rid of the c5 hole with 11...c5 seriously weakens the d5 pawn. 12.♘c3!

9.bxc4 ♘c6



9...dxc4 It makes no sense to give up the center and create an isolated pawn on the c-file. 10.♕c2! with the direct threat of ♘g5 winning, and if Black prevents it, ♘a3-c4 comes.

10.♗xf6!

A really clever and concrete decision. White intends to put pressure on the d5 pawn, so first he eliminates its defender on f6 and then, with the knight on c3 and the bishop on g2, he forces Black to take on c4. This is a clear positional achievement, since it opens the h1–a8 diagonal and weakens Black's pawn structure.

10...♕xf6 11.d4

11.♘c3! seems to be even stronger as 11...dxc4 drops an exchange after 12.♘d4! ♘xd4 13.♗xa8

11...♖b8!

Black removes himself from the bishop's diagonal so that the win of the exchange shown in the 11.♘c3 line does not work anymore.

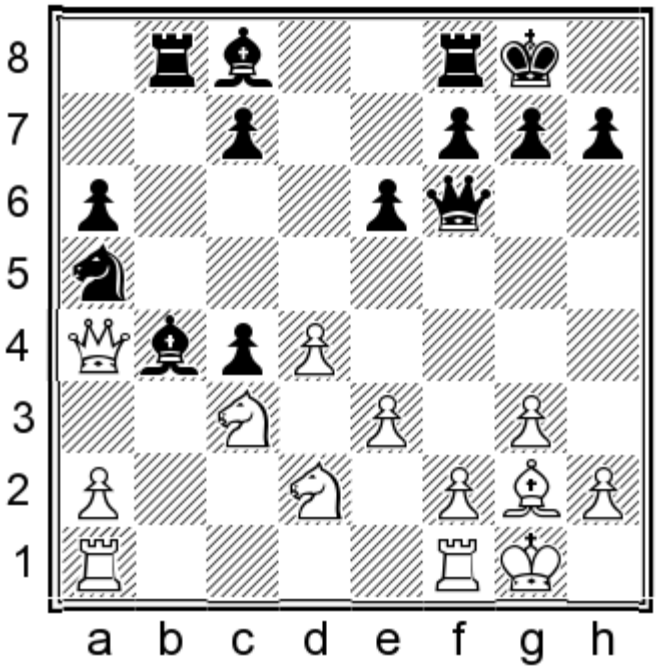
12.♘c3 dxc4 13.♘d2!

This was the basic idea of ♗xf6. White has achieved a better pawn structure and his minor pieces are excellently placed.

13...♘a5

Black tries to at least save his material advantage to compensate for the positional deficits, but his knight is going to be misplaced at the edge of the board. White cannot trap it, however, as Black has ...♗b4.

14.♕a4 ♗b4



15.a3!

Forcing Black to give up his bishop pair. 15.♖ab1 would not force Black to play ...♗xc3, which would be a better version for White compared to the game, after ♘e4. However, Black has 15...♕e7! evading the ♘e4 idea.

15...♗xc3 16.♘e4 ♕f5 17.♘xc3 ♘b3!

Black starts to create complications.

18.♖ad1

To control the threatened invasions on the d-file with ...♘d2 and ...♕d3.

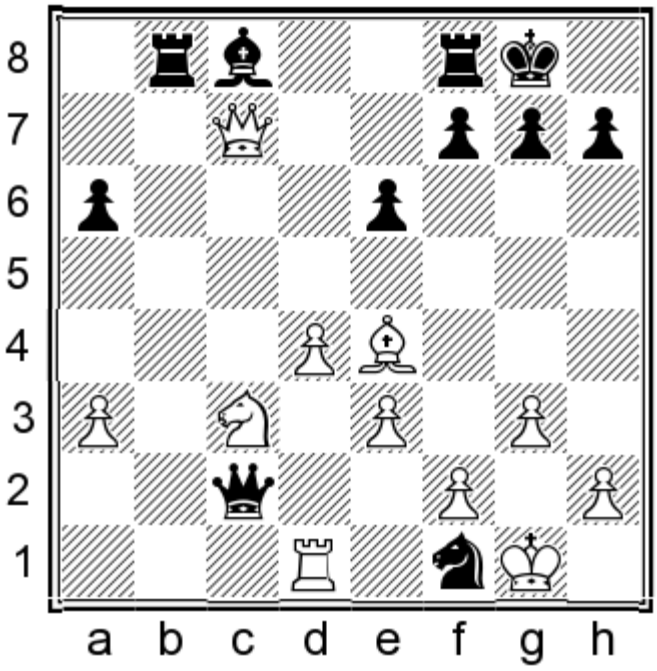
18...♕c2

Black would like to equalize in tactical fashion, but there are many hidden tactical resources in this position. 18...c5 is principled, to get rid of the weakness, but Black does not achieve complete equality because of the strong 19.d5! with ♕xc4 next. However 18...♕a5!? was an option 19.♕xc4 ♗d7 when Black has finished his development and intends to push ...c5 to equalize.

19.♕xc4 ♘d2 20.♕xc7!

This move needed precise calculation, but Giri is very good at it! Probably Bartel expected 20.♕e2 ♕xc3 21.♖xd2 ♕xa3 22.♖c2 when White soon wins back the pawn and a draw would be the most logical outcome.

20...♘xf1 21.♗e4!



This was the point, and after the queen goes to the b-file, ♖b1 is coming. Black seems to be in trouble, although the computer suggests a surprising defense...

21...♖b7?

An incredible idea, but unfortunately for Black, it does not work... However, after 21...♕b2! 22.♖b1 ♘d2! 23.♖xb2 ♖xb2 despite being a pawn down and having a poor bishop on c8, the computer sees no problem for Black. Anyway, it is understandable that Black avoided this continuation.

22.♕c5!!

Giri finds the refutation to the previous mistake. White creates a new tactical threat with ♗xh7 when the f8 rook is hanging. After the seemingly winning 22.♗xb7 Black's devilish idea was 22...♘xe3! 23.♗e4 (*23.fxe3 ♗xb7 24.♕xb7 ♕xc3* is just fine for Black.) It looks like the game is over, but 23...♘d5!! and Black equalizes. 24.♗xc2 ♘xc7=

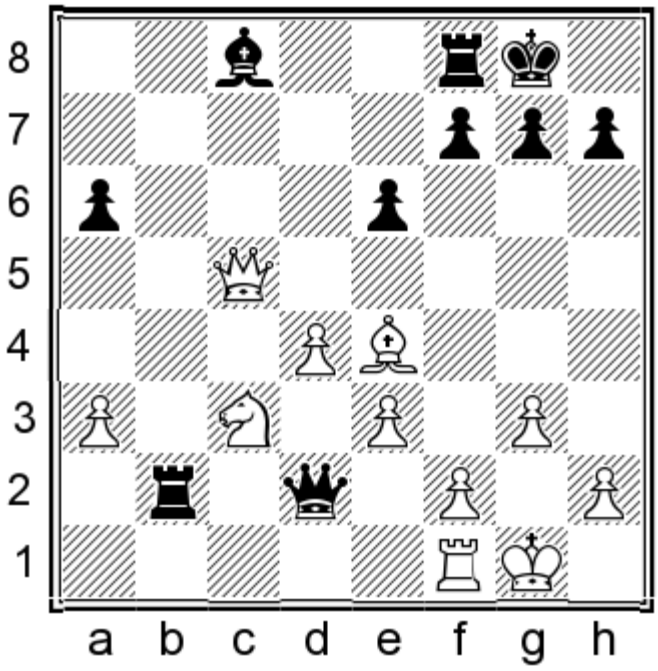
22...♕b2 23.♖b1! ♕d2

23...♘d2 is not the same as in the 21...♕b2 line. Now White wins after 24.♗xh7+! The move order is very important! (*24.♖xb2?* could met by the intermediate move *24...♘xe4!* and the queen is hanging.) 24...♔xh7 25.♖xb2 ♖xb2 26.♕xf8+– and wins.

24.♖xf1!

This is the most precise, but again a tactical finesse had to be foreseen... Black cannot prevent ♗xb7 and ♗xh7 at the same time. 24.♗xb7 ♗xb7 25.♔xf1 also gives a big advantage, but Black gets some compensation on the light squares with 25...♗f3

24...♖b2



25.♗xh7+! ♔xh7 26.♘e4!

A necessary intermediate move. Otherwise, Black takes on c3 and protects the bishop on c8.

26...♕c2 27.♕xf8 ♕xe4 28.♕xc8

Now it is completely lost. Black is two pawns down and his pawns are hanging. He does not even have the typical counterplay against the king with ...h5-h4-h3.

28...a5 29.♕c5 a4 30.♕a7

Another pawn is falling.

30...f5 31.♕xa4 ♔h6 32.♕e8 ♖a2 33.h4 ♖xa3 34.h5 1–0

GAME 14
V. Ivanchuk (2757)
V. Kramnik (2810)
FIDE Candidates
London ENG (14.3)
01.04.2013, [B08]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Before the round, it seemed like Kramnik needed a full point to even have a theoretical chance to win the tournament, and who could be a better opponent than Ivanchuk!? Meanwhile, Carlsen was playing White against Svidler with a better tie-break. So, Kramnik decided before the game to go for all-or-nothing, which in the end turned out to be a bitter decision for him.

1.d4 d6 2.e4

In the candidates, Ivanchuk lost 5 games on time! So, Kramnik wanted to get a complicated position, and he likes the Pirc.

2...♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♗e2

White chooses a very solid line with ♗e2.

5...0-0 6.0-0 a6 7.h3 ♘c6

Trying to provoke the d5 move, after which the bishop on g7 will become super-strong.

8.♗g5 b5

What a crazy line by Black. This cannot be good, but Kramnik takes the risk, trying to achieve complications at all costs!

9.a3

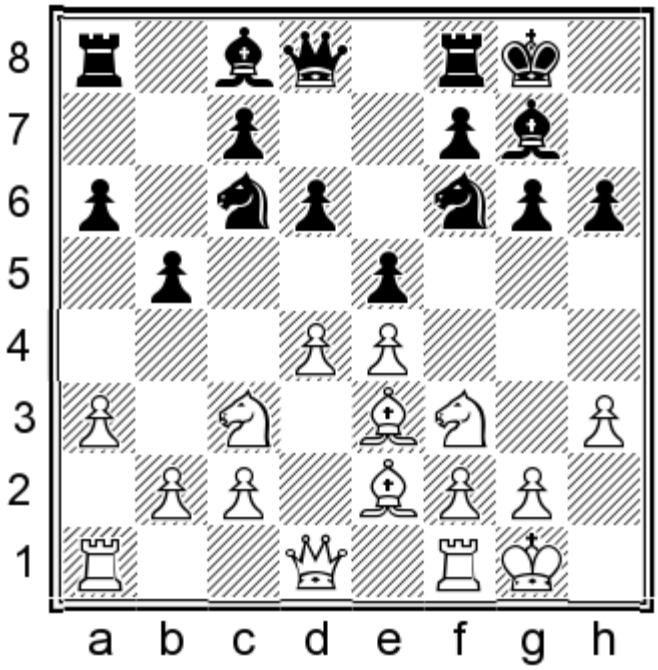
Ivanchuk remains very cool. In case of 9.d5 trying to get the knight to d4, Black has a tactical resource: 9...b4!

9...h6 10.♗e3

White's position seems to be very good: a strong center, plus the idea of playing d5 next. This forces Black to be very careful in order not to get in big trouble.

10...e5!

Black needs to do something in the center and the e5 move is exactly the right choice. Even though White keeps his advantage, Black gets what he wanted — a very complicated game with three possible results!



11.dxe5!

The correct decision. A worse choice for White would have been to play 11.d5?! ♘e7 and we have sort of a KID

structure with the usual plan for Black to play ...♘h7-f5 or ...♘d7-f5, with very unclear play.

11...dxe5 12.♕c1

Using a “free” tempo because the pawn on h6 is hanging now.

12...♔h7 13.♗c5

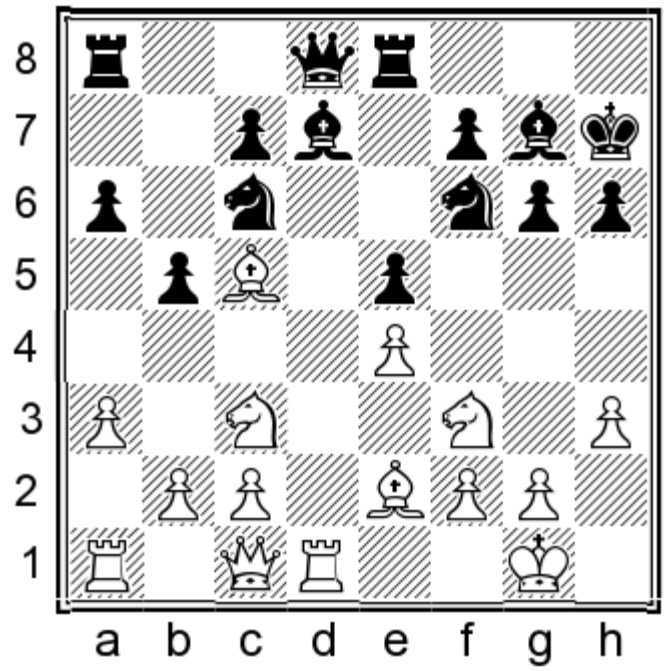
Taking away the e7 square from the Black queen.

13...♖e8 14.♖d1

and White takes the only open file.

14...♗d7

I think it is obvious that White is doing better here, but the position is far from simple. As we know from the KID structures, Black’s position is very solid, and if he manages to establish the knight on d4 (by exchanging the dark-squared bishops) the position might become totally unclear.



15.b4!

Ivanchuk continues playing a great game. Of course, White’s play must be on the queenside, and the idea of playing b4, followed by a4, is very effective.

15...♕c8 16.♕e3 ♘d8

Black transfers his knight to e6, clearly the best square.

17.a4 bxa4 18.♘xa4

White has managed to open the a-file, so the Black pawn a6 comes under attack.

18...♘e6 19.♗c4

It is never wrong to put the bishop on c4.

19...♘h5 20.♘c3 ♘hf4

Black is still fighting. Now ...♘xg2 will always be a threat. White needs to consider it on every move.

21.♘d5?!

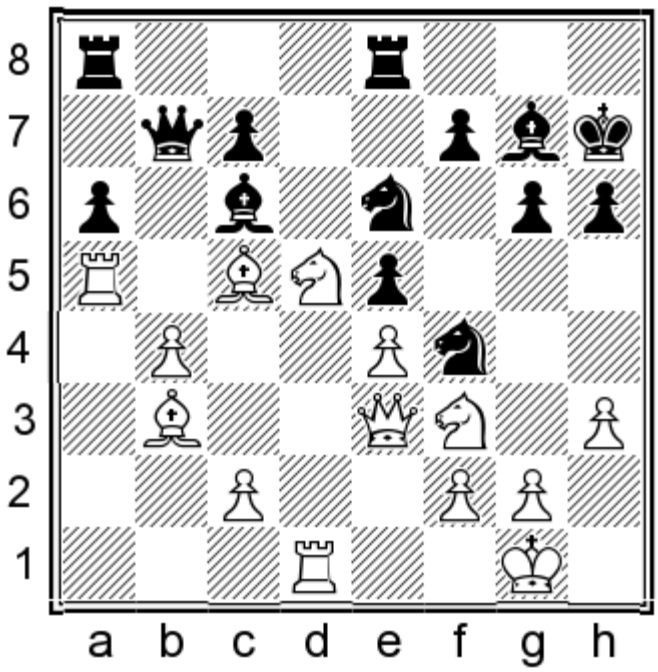
Until here, Ivanchuk has played a great game and is clearly better. It was time to continue on the right path by playing 21.♖a5, with the simple idea of playing ♖da1. 21...♘xg2 This does not work here because of 22.♔xg2 ♘f4+ 23.♔g1 ♗xh3 24.♘e1 and the g2 square is protected. White is a piece up and winning.

21...♗b5!

A strong move by Black. White is deflected from his pressure on a6 for a move.

22.♗b3 ♗c6 23.♖a5 ♕b7

The position is becoming totally unclear! I guess that by now Kramnik was very happy with his own play, but not that happy with Carlsen's position, who seemed to have a clear advantage against Svidler. So, to play for a win seemed to be the only choice for Vladimir — it does not matter how!



24.g3!!

Wow, what a move! It is clear that Ivanchuk was afraid of Black's ...f5 and decided to release the pressure of the position by sacrificing a pawn. A really fantastic move by White.

24...♘xh3+

An attempt to enter into a complete mess does not seem to work for Black: 24...f5 25.gxf4! Cool and strong, following

the rule: if you are not sure about what to do, grab some material. 25...exf4 26.♘xf4 and probably Black does not have enough compensation for the piece.

25.♔g2 ♘hg5 26.♖h1

pushing the Black king to g8.

26...♔g8

This next variation would lead to a pretty mate: 26...♘xf3?? 27.♘f6+ ♔h8 28.♖xh6+ ♗xh6 29.♕xh6#

27.♘xg5 ♘xg5 28.f3!

White does not panic and keeps his cool. The pressure on the a6-pawn and the great position of his pieces give him the better chances.

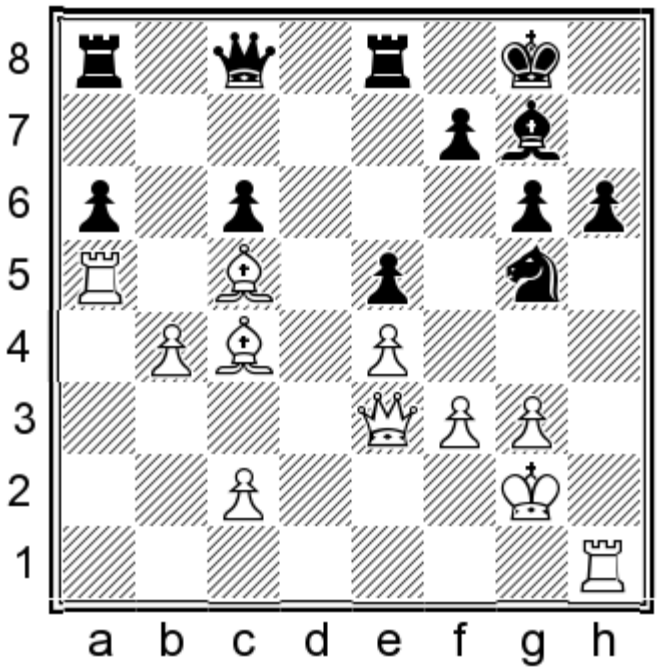
28...♗xd5

Not a nice move to make, but what else to play?! White's threat of playing ♘e7 was too dangerous.

29.♗xd5 c6 30.♗c4

Now it is clear that the pawn on a6 is going to fall.

30...♕c8?



This move looks bad. Probably Kramnik was still hoping to win the game as he was not sure what would happen in the Carlsen game. The simple 30...♘e6! 31.♗xe6 ♖xe6 32.♖ha1 would just lead to a slightly better position for White, with big drawing tendencies.

31.♕b3!

Very strong! Fixing the f7 pawn and not giving Black the chance to play ...♘e6 so easily.

31...h5

Black tries to create something on the kingside, but there is nothing left to do anymore. White is simply crushing the whole position on the queenside.

32.♗e3 ♘e6 33.♖ha1

The a6 pawn is falling.

33...h4 34.gxh4 ♕d8

Black still has some hopes, but Ivanchuk again remains cool.

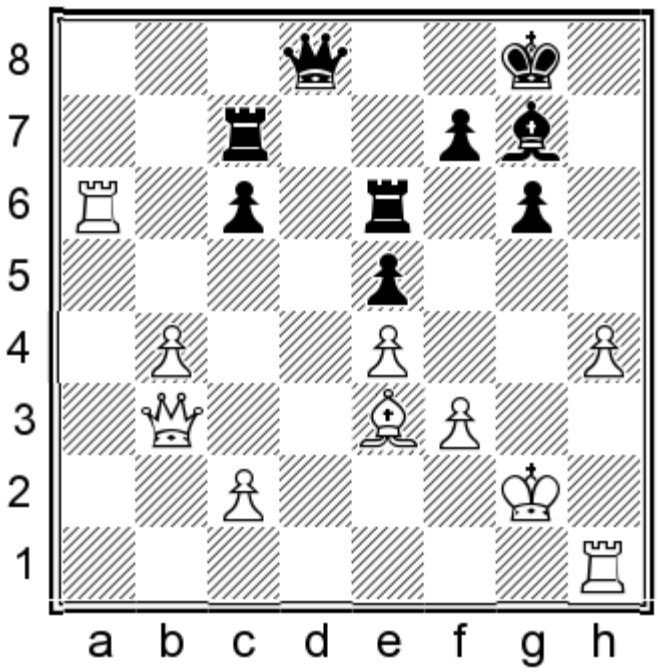
35.♖xa6 ♖c8 36.♖h1

It is hard to give Black any advice here. White is completely dominating the position with his extra pawn!

36...♖c7 37.♗xe6

This move was not necessary, but Ivanchuk chooses a simple way to finish the game.

37...♖xe6

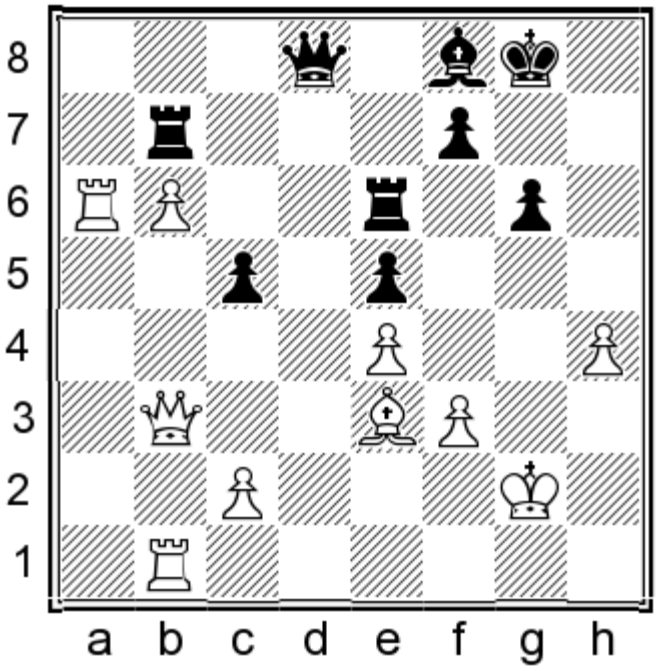


38.b5!

The b-pawn takes away Black's last hopes.

38...♖b7 39.b6 c5 40.♖b1 ♗f8

The time-trouble period is over and, with it, any hopes of saving the game for Kramnik. I guess he stood up now and was totally shocked, as Carlsen was close to resigning his game against Svidler. What drama!



41.♕d5!

Precise technique by Ivanchuk.

41...♕b8 42.♖ba1 ♖d6

Of course, 42...♖bxb6 just loses to 43.♖a8 ♕c7 44.♗h6 and White wins the bishop on f8.

43.♖a8 ♖xd5 44.♖xb8 ♖xb8 45.exd5

Bad luck for Black. The endgame is completely lost.

45...♗d6

In case of 45...♖xb6 46.♖a8 ♔g7 47.♖xf8! White is a full piece up. 47...♔xf8 48.♗xc5+ ♔e8 49.♗xb6

46.♖a6 ♖b7 47.♔f1

and the White king is going to b5. Black is helpless! What an emotional finish to the Candidates with a double loss by the leaders, Carlsen and Kramnik. Who would have bet on this before the last round? Clearly not Kramnik, who showed very strong character by playing for a win with the Black pieces, while avoiding draw-ish continuations!

1–0

GAME 15
M. Carlsen (2872)
P. Svidler (2747)
FIDE Candidates
London ENG (14.2)
01.04.2013, [C84]

Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

It’s the last round of the Candidates. Carlsen and Kramnik are leading the event with +4, but Carlsen has a better tie-break. If Carlsen makes a full point, nothing can help Vladimir anymore. Kramnik is playing Ivanchuk with the black pieces. If both players draw, Carlsen will be declared winner as well; the same goes for a double zero. We will see a very strange and slightly atypical game by Carlsen, who after playing very well (as usual) completely lost control of the position. It is a little weird to see Carlsen as a mortal human being!

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0! ♗e7 6.d3

The Spanish with 6.d3, one of Carlsen’s favorite openings. Maybe White does not get any advantage out of the opening, but the game is “slow” and there is enough time to outplay the opponent. As we should remember, Magnus won a nice game against the same Peter Svidler in this opening with Black just 7 rounds earlier...

6...b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.a3

Quite a rare move. More often, White plays 8.c3. A great game to follow from the White side is Leko-Caruana from Wijk aan Zee.

8...0-0 9.♘c3

White’s main idea is to remain ready against Black’s ...♘a5-♗a2-c5. Now the White knight will be able to jump immediately to the d5 square.

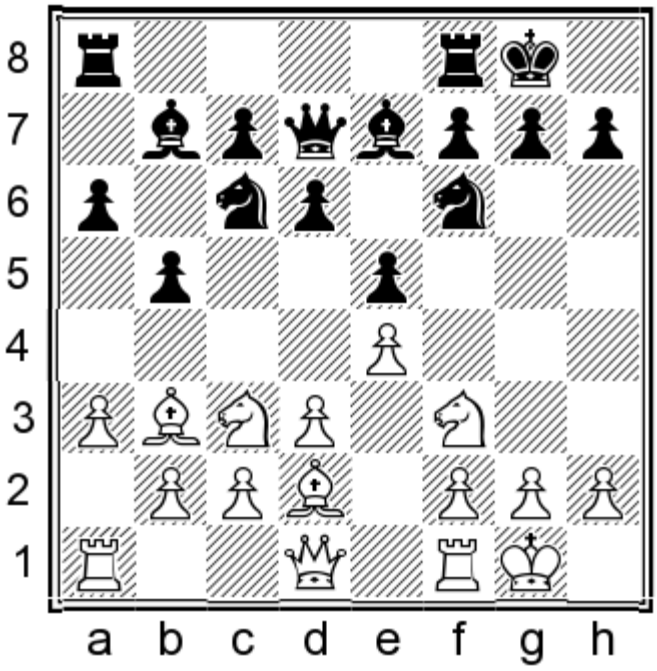
9...♗b7

Preparing the ...♘a5 move. In general, I think it is easier for Black to keep the bishop on e6. So, perhaps a move like 9...♗d7 is an option too.

10.♗d2

White acts against the ...♘a5 move once again.

10...♕d7



11.a4!

A very strong move, and Magnus shows a great understanding of the position. Now the Black bishop on b7 is not very well-placed. The a4 move becomes very effective, even if it looks like a lost tempo because of 8.a3.

11...♘d8

The black knight is going to e6. In case of 11...♘d4 12.♘xd4 exd4 13.♘e2 c5 14.♘g3 it seems like White is doing a bit better. His next move could be ♘f5, followed by ♕f3, with some attacking chances against the king.

12.axb5 axb5 13.♖xa8 ♗xa8

We now have a very typical Spanish position. Probably White is a bit better, but Black is very solid. White now needs to find a plan.

14.♘e2

I am not sure whether this move can bring White any advantage or not. 14.♘d5!? This seems to be the only attempt to reach a +/= evaluation. In the event of 14...♘xd5 15.exd5, the black knight on d8 is very badly placed, and in case of 14...♘e6 15.♘xe7, White's position should be a little better.

14...♘e6 15.♘g3 c5

Now Black controls all of the center. White's only chance of getting a better position is to start some play on the kingside, which is very difficult to achieve.

16.♘f5 ♗d8

Of course, Black does not give away his bishop.

17.c4

A typical move. White stops Black from playing ...d5 and, at the same time defends against the ...c4 move. However, the d4 square is weakened and White's pawn structure is clearly not the best anymore.

17...bxc4 18.♗xc4

Black is trying to push ...d5.

18...♗c7 19.♖e1

and White is protecting against this idea.

19...♖e8?!

A very strange-looking move to me. Why not simply put the rook on b8 and play ...g6 next, or ...♗c6-♗b5. The position looks very equal.

20.♕c1

Magnus starts to go for the Black king, but with the knights on f6 and e6 Black is very safe. An attempt to get rid of the weak pawn on b2 with 20.b4 would be countered by 20...d5! 21.exd5 ♗xd5 and probably only Black can play for an advantage here.

20...♘h5

20...d5 does not work in light of 21.exd5 ♗xd5 22.♘xe5 and White is a pawn up, e.g. 22...♗xe5 23.♖xe5 ♗xc4 24.♕xc4

21.g3

A very logical reaction, but perhaps White should not have been afraid of ♘hf4?! 21.b4 using his chance to exchange the b2 pawn. 21...cxb4 22.♗xb4 and now, in case of 22...♘hf4?! 23.♕a3 White gets huge pressure against the d6-pawn and gains a clear advantage.

21...g6

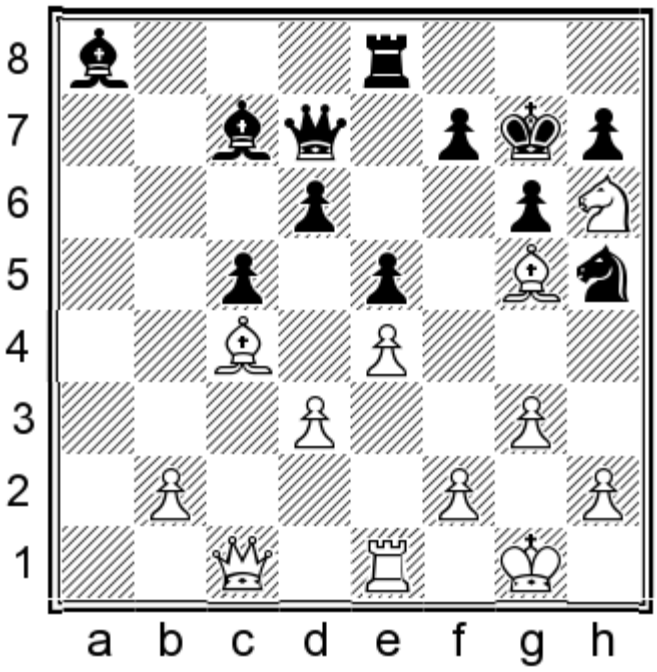
The position is now getting very complicated.

22.♘h6+ ♔g7

In many lines, Black might want to play ...♘ef4, so Magnus decides not to give Svidler any chance to use some tactical tricks.

23.♘g5 ♘xg5 24.♗xg5

Let's take a fresh look at the position. It seems like White is slightly better again: the knight on h6 is attacking the f7-pawn and the Black bishop on c7 is quite passively placed.



24...d5!

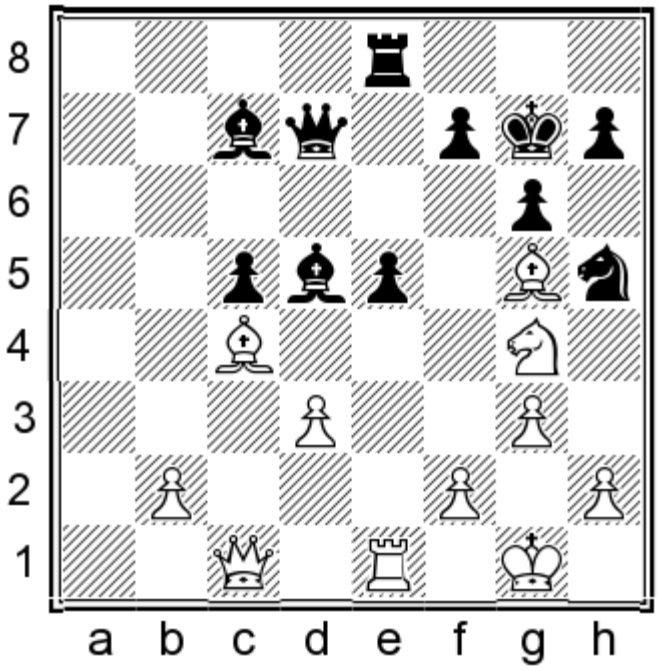
A very good decision by Black. We should not forget that Magnus is playing for a huge jackpot: the WC match. This builds huge pressure even in the World's Nr.1

25.exd5

White does not gain anything by 25.♗xd5 ♗xd5 26.exd5 ♗a5! pushing away the rook from the e-file, followed by ...f6 and ...♕xd5. Black is perfectly fine here.

25...♗xd5 26.♘g4?!

It looks like Carlsen has just blundered to his opponent's next move.



A much safer move for White would have been 26.♗xd5 ♕xd5 27.♘g4 and, of course, the position is close to a draw — but only White can play for a win.

26...♗f3!

Very strong. The position is just crazy, and I think Magnus wanted to avoid this at all costs.

27.♗f6+

Maybe a safe move like 27.h3 was still very playable?

27...♔g8 28.♘h6+ ♔f8 29.♕e3

The game is getting super-exciting. Black wanted to give mate with ...♕h3, but White is attacking from all sides as well!

29...♗b7

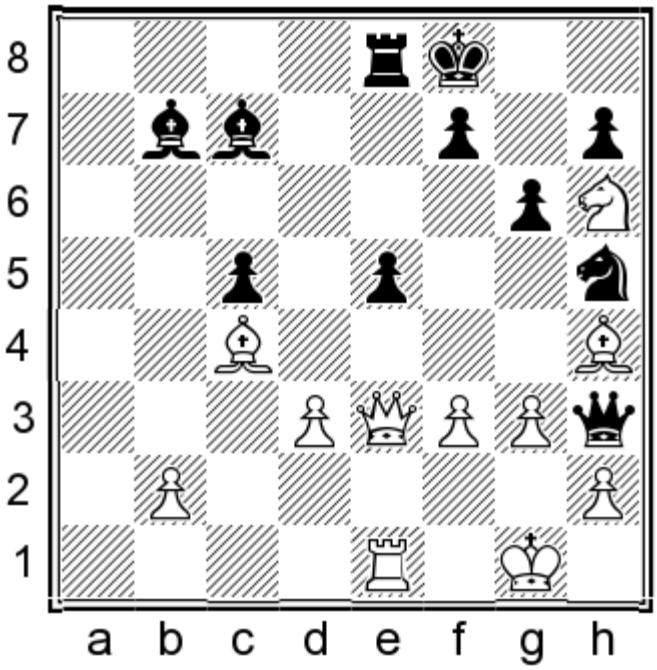
Very logical. Black wants to play ...♕c6 next.

30.♗h4

A very human reply. The crazy computer move 30.♗h8! might give White some advantage. 30...♕c6 31.f3 The position remains very complicated and, who likes to play with the ♘h6 and ♗h8?!

30...♕h3 31.f3?

After this move, Black completely takes over the game.

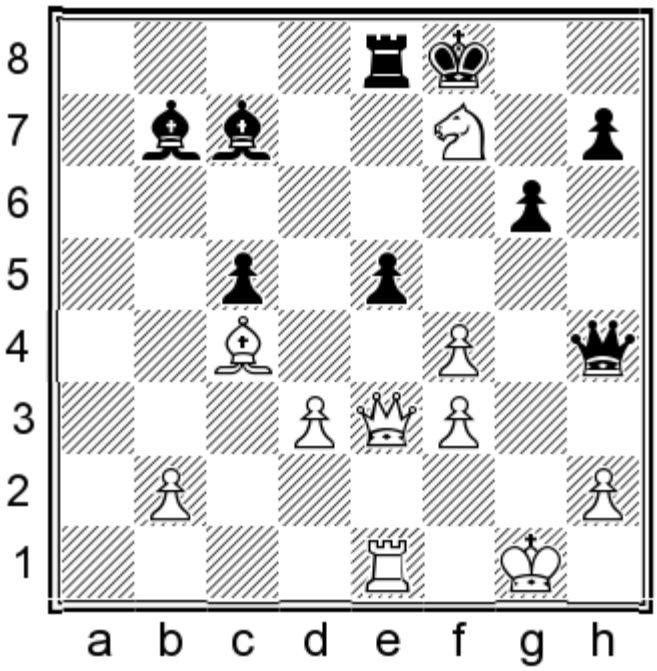


White had a fantastic tactical trick: 31.♗d5! Very exact calculation was needed to play this move, and Carlsen was in slight time-trouble already. 31...♗xd5 32.♕xc5+ ♔g7 33.♕xd5 ♔xh6 34.♕xf7! A double attack on the e8 rook and c7 bishop. 34...♖c8 It seems like Black is just winning, but 35.♗e7! A really great move that is very hard to find during a practical game. 35...♕f5 36.♕xf5 gxf5 37.♖c1! and Black is helpless against White's ♗d6 next. 37...♔g6 38.♗d6 ♗xd6 39.♖xc8 with good winning chances for White, but I think that to find such a line in a practical game is just impossible!

31...♘f4!

Black grabs his chance!

32.gxf4 ♕xh4 33.♘xf7



33...♗xf3!

Black is suddenly just winning! The bishop pair, plus a strong attack and White's problems with the clock, do not leave any chances to escape even for the great Magnus.

34.♕f2 ♕g4+ 35.♕g3 exf4

Black is a clear pawn up in the endgame. The bishops are very well-placed and the White knight is totally out of the game. The game is basically over.

36.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 37.♕xg4 ♗xg4 38.♘g5

This last attempt by White to complicate the position ends in nothing.

38...h6 39.♘f7 h5 40.♘h6 ♗d1

Time-trouble is over and, with it, the game.

41.♔f2

Of course, it is no good to play 41.♗f7+ ♔f8 42.♗xg6 ♔g7 and Black is winning a piece.

41...f3 42.h3 ♗f4 43.♘f7 g5

I think White could just resign, but as Carlsen said in the press conference after the game, he did not want to resign until he was sure that Ivanchuk would win against Kramnik.

44.♔e1 g4

The black pawns are unstoppable.

45.hxg4 hxg4 46.♔xd1 g3 47.♔e1 g2 48.♔f2 ♗h2

A very exciting game! Who would think that in the last round both Carlsen and Kramnik would lose their games?! Chess is full of surprises!

0–1

GAME 16
J. L. Hammer (2608)
Hao Wang (2743)
Supreme Masters 2013
Sandnes NOR (5.5)
13.05.2013, [E60]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

The first win for Hammer in the tournament, and in what a fantastic fighting game! It is clear that Wang, with +140 ELO points above his opponent, tried to complicate things as much as he could, but lost the battle in a very complex position.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6

After these two moves, we still do not know whether the game is going to be a KID or a Gruenfeld.

3.f3

Lately, White started to choose this move order to avoid the main Gruenfeld.

3...♗g7

3...d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 is, of course, the other main line.

4.e4 d6

and now we are in the KID.

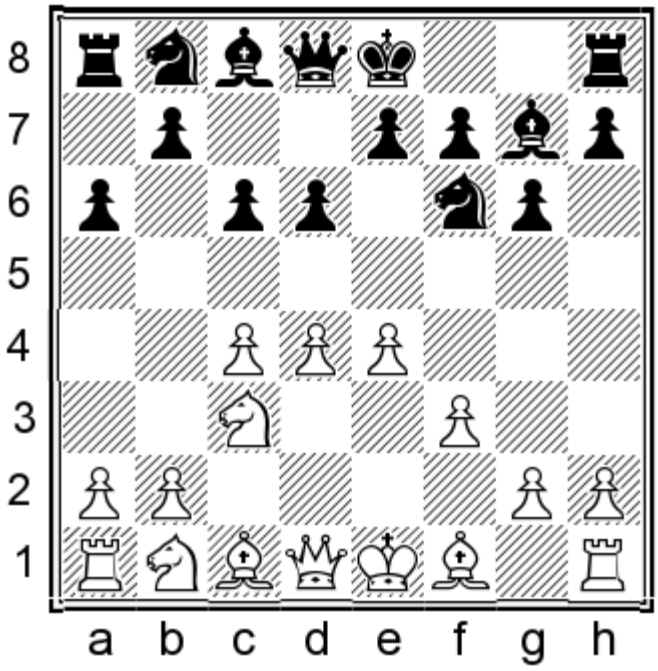
5.♘e2!?

Hammer quickly forces things away from theory. This slightly strange-looking move is actually quite logical. White wants to play ♘ec3-♗e3-♘d2 in order to get a very strong center.

5...a6!?

Quite a creative move from Wang. Black is not trying to act in the center by playing ...c5 — or maybe at some opportune moment ...e5, but instead prepares the ...c6-b5 idea.

6.♘ec3 c6



7.♘a3

To me, this looks a bit “too creative”. 7.♗e3 b5 8.♘d2 looks more solid for White. 7.a4?! would be a typical inaccuracy here; 7...a5! and Black would continue with ♘a6 winning control of the dark squares.

7...b5 8.♘c2 0-0 9.♗e3 ♘bd7

All the standard moves are done. Now it is time to think about a future plan.

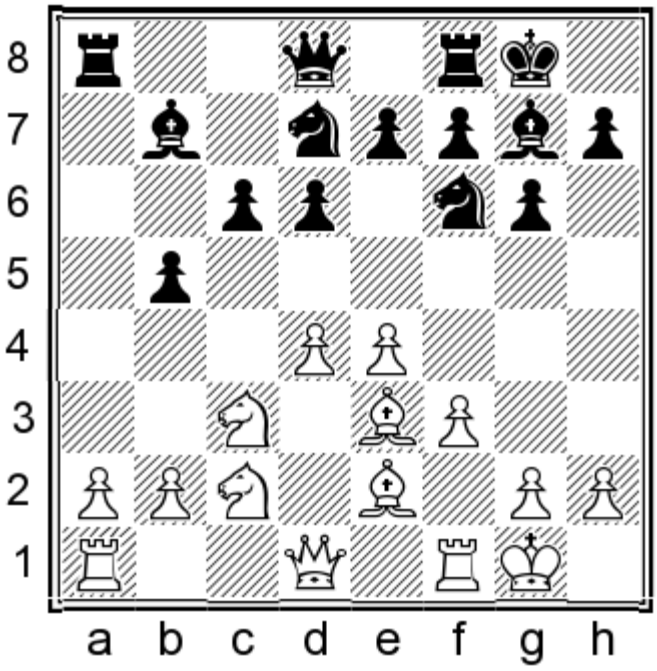
10.cxb5

After this move, Black should be doing fine. But, what else to play for White?! In case of 10.♗e2 bxc4 11.♗xc4 d5 Black is fine as well.

10...axb5 11.♗e2 ♗b7

To develop our pieces is never wrong.

12.0-0



12...e5!

I think this was a good positional decision by Black, in a very complex position with a lot of different ideas. He realizes that he needs to attack the white center and not allow his opponent to play ♕d2, ♖ad1, a3, after which White's advantage would grow.

13.♕d2 exd4 14.♗xd4

We have a typical position for the KID structures. A lot of the strategies are based on tactical possibilities. Black usually looks for active play while White tries to keep things together. Objectively, I think this position should be good for Black.

14...♕e7

Queen to e7, rook to d8 — very logical. Another normal place for the black queen is c7, but now it would not be optimal because of ♖ac1 and the queen could quickly come under attack.

15.a3

A risky move, as now the black knight gets the b3 square. 15.♖fd1 would have been more solid.

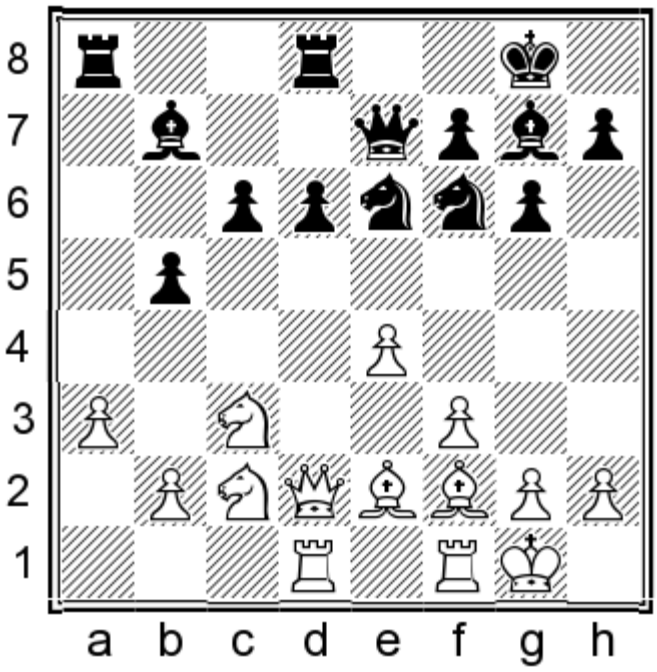
15...♘c5 16.♖ad1

A tactical defense against ♘b3.

16...♖fd8

Very solid. Maybe the following pawn sacrifice was possible as well: 16...♘b3 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♕xd6 ♕xd6 19.♖xd6 ♗e5 and although Black is a pawn down, the dark-squared bishop is a monster piece that clearly gives very good compensation.

17.♗f2 ♘e6?!



A slightly strange decision. Probably Wang did not want to exchange pieces and was trying to keep the position as complicated as possible. 17...d5! If Black can play ...d5, he should definitely do it! In my opinion, Black is already slightly better here.

18.♗h4!

A good place for the white bishop. No more ...♘h5 or ...d5 because of the pin, and a move like ...g5 is clearly not an option for Black.

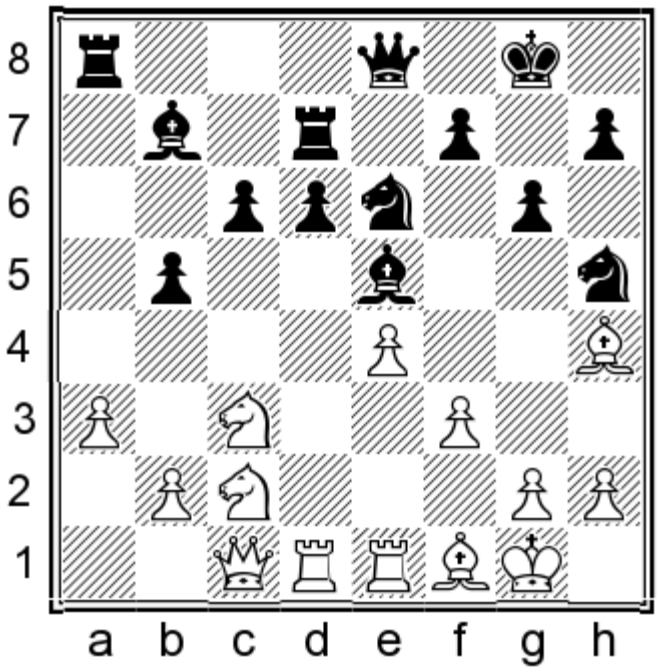
18...♖d7 19.♕c1 ♕e8

Black is moving his pieces away from the nasty pin.

20.♖fe1 ♘h5 21.♗f1

White consolidates in the center as well. The position remains very complex.

21...♗e5



I think Wang asks too much of his position and provokes White into something that he might regret. 21...♕f8 would be a possible solid way to go on.

22.g3!

It might be that Wang blundered against this very strong reply by White. The idea of playing f4-f5 next can be very dangerous for Black.

22...f6

The beginning of some crazy complications.

23.f4

Hammer has no fear at all and he is right! White's play is stronger here.

23...g5

Nothing else left for Black to do.

24.fxe5 gxh4 25.exd6?

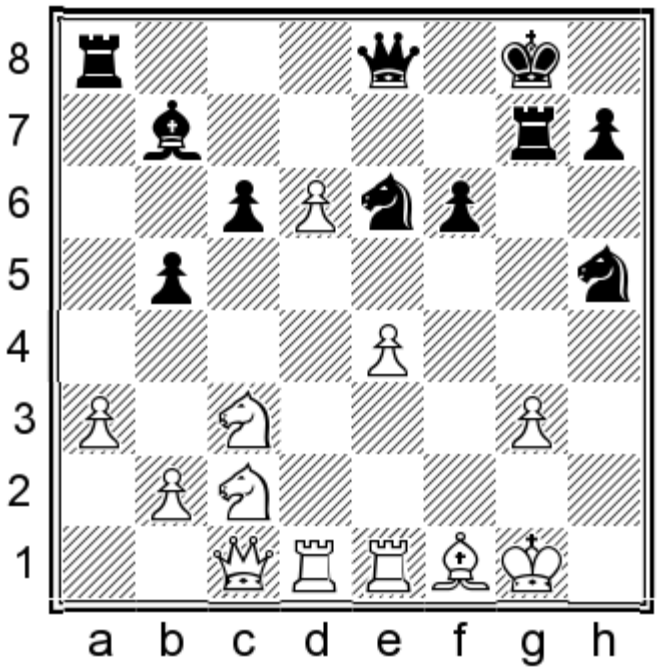
Quite a serious mistake. 25.♕h6! White should have continued in a dynamic way. 25...fxe5 Probably Black has a better option, but here White's idea becomes more visible. 26.♗h3! and Black would have problems bringing his pieces together.

25...hxg3

Now the white king becomes seriously weakened.

26.hxg3 ♖g7

Suddenly, White is under big pressure — but the position remains very complicated.



27.♘e2!

Good defense by Hammer. He needs to exchange at least a couple of pieces to reduce the power of Black's attack.

27...♘xg3 28.♘xg3 ♖xg3+ 29.♔f2 ♖g7

We are faced with a very funny position. Who is better here? It is hard to say. At first sight, White's king is very badly placed on f2, but on the other hand, if White manages to play ♗d3-♖g1, suddenly the black king would be in trouble. White's idea ♘e3-♘f5 next might be very dangerous as well. Black needs to react very quickly.

30.♘e3

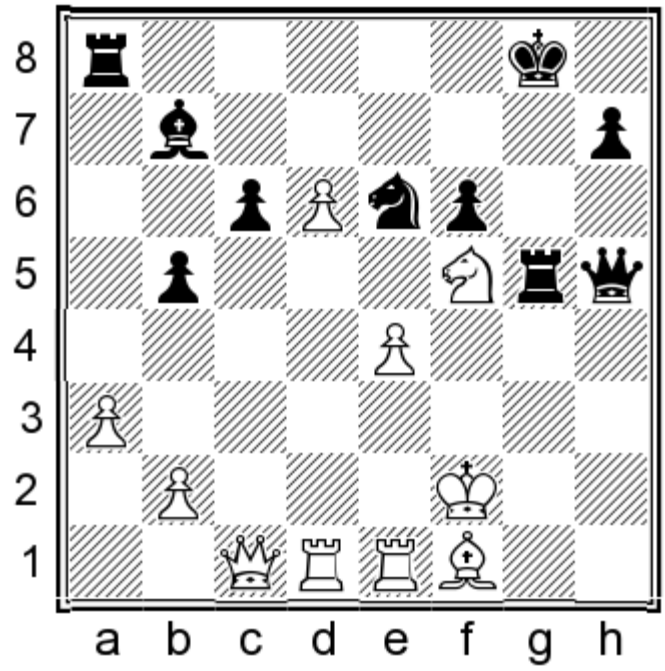
The white knight is on a roll.

30...♕h5 31.♘f5

It is funny to see how just one knight holds White's position together.

31...♖g5?

In a very complex position, Black gives his opponent a "break" to consolidate.



First 31...♕h2+ to force the white king to a bad square on e3. 32.♔e3 and only now 32...♖g5 would give Black a very dangerous attack.

32.♖e3!

Now the White king escapes to e1!

32...♕h2+ 33.♔e1

Suddenly Black has no more threats against the white king, and the d6-pawn becomes super-strong.

33...♘f4 34.d7

White could have finished the game on the spot by playing 34.♖d2! forcing the black queen away from h2, which will also disturb Black's ...♖g1 idea, so 34...♕g1 and only now 35.♕c3 The f6-pawn is going to fall and, with it, the whole black position.

34...♖d8 35.♕c3

Of course, ♕c3 is strong here as well. It is clear now that White is much better.

35...♖g1

Threatening ...♘g2.

36.♖g3+

White exchanges one of the few active pieces Black has.

36...♖xg3 37.♘xg3?!

Hammer asks for too much now. 37.♕xg3+ would also lead to a much better endgame for White.

37...♕h4!

The game becomes tricky again. White's knight cannot reach his best square on f5 because of the nasty pin.

38.♔f2 ♔f7?

I would like to know what White planned to play against 38...♕h2+ 39.♔f3 ♘h5 and it seems like Black is back in the game?

39.b4

It is always good to fix Black's pawn structure, but the ...♕h2 idea is still there.

39...♘e6?

The wrong direction. 39...♕h2+ with an unclear position.

40.♕f3!

With the 40th move, White fixes his advantage! And it is already quite a big one. The bishop on b7 is really a dead piece and the d7-pawn is super-dangerous — it can always be protected with ♗h3 in the future.

40...♘g5?

It was the last chance for Black to complicate things by playing 40...c5!

41.♕f5

Now White completely dominates the position. ♗g2-♖h1 is a deadly threat.

41...♘e6

Black tries to react to White's threat, but the bishop is coming to h3 now.

42.♗h3 ♕f4+ 43.♕xf4 ♘xf4 44.♗f5

We can clearly see that there is no escape for Black.

44...♔e7 45.♖h1!

The simplest! Black is playing a "bishop" down.

45...♖h8 46.♔e3

The last precise move.

46...♘e6 47.♗xe6 ♔xe6 48.♖xh7

A small tactic.

48...♖d8 49.♘h5

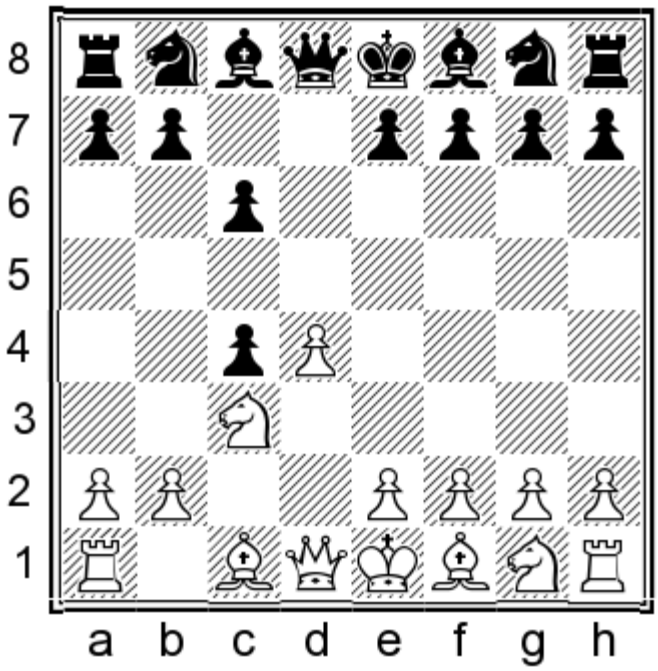
and it is over. What a great fighting game!

1–0

GAME 17
S. Mamedyarov (2761)
Wang Hao (2752)
Grand Prix, Beijing
07.07.2013, [D10]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

A very interesting and tough game follows that was not without mistakes, but in such complicated positions they are unavoidable.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 dxc4



A side-line of the Slav Defence, which often leads to unusual positions, just as in our game. I am personally a big fan of this line and have used it several times as Black, and recently it has also appeared on the highest level from time-to-time.

4.e3

4.e4 is the other main line.

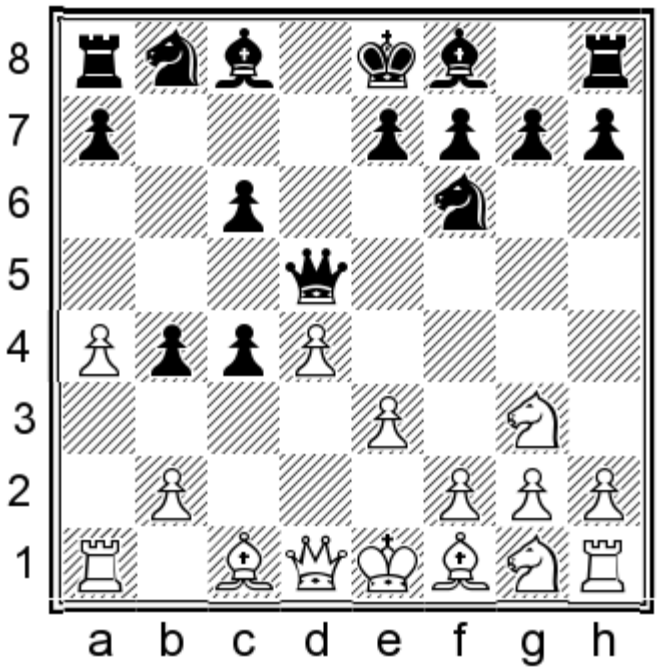
4...b5

Black tries to hold his pawn for as long as he can, which is the point of this variation.

5.a4 b4 6.♘e4 ♕d5

Black still keeps his pawn. 6...♗a6 was bad in view of ♘c5.

7.♘g3 ♘f6



8.♗e2!

The critical move! The g2 pawn is naturally taboo because ♗f3 would trap the queen, and White prepares for a sacrifice in the center. The theory of this line started to develop not so long ago.

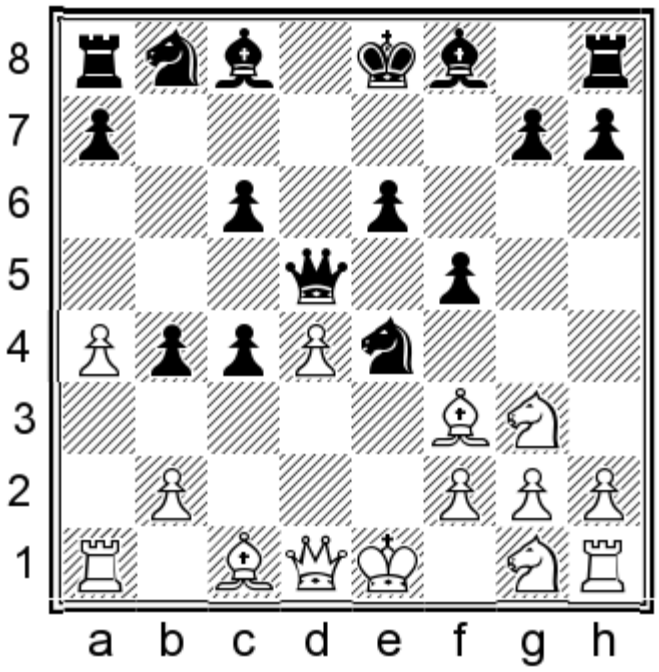
8...e6

A new direction. I have played more games with 8...♗a6 9.e4 ♘xe4 10.♗f3 f5 which is very similar to the game.

9.e4!

9.♘f3 would transpose to the old lines, when White used to play 8.♘f3, but these are just completely fine for Black after 9...♗a6

9...♘xe4 10.♗f3 f5



11.♕e2

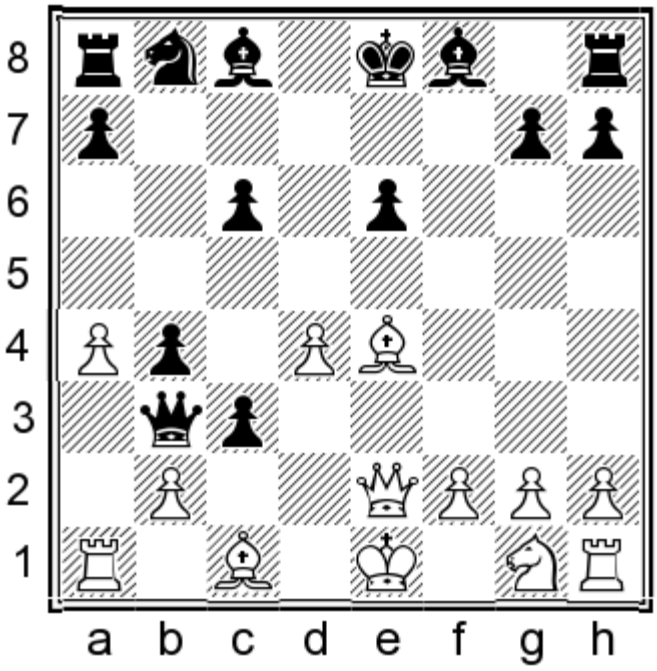
The first difference between 8...♗a6 and the text move is that after 11.♘1e2, with the idea of ♘f4, Black can play 11...♗d6! 12.♘f4 ♗xf4 13.♗xf4 0-0 14.0-0 c3 with very complex positions, which require further analysis. Black has a material advantage, but White's pieces are better.

11...c3

To grab another pawn with 11...♕xd4 is a bit too greedy, as after 12.♘xe4 fxe4 13.♗xe4 the White pieces develop with tempo after ♘f3, with more than enough compensation.

12.♘xe4 fxe4 13.♗xe4 ♕b3

It is quite certain that both players are still following their preparation. Black creates the unpleasant threat of ...♗a6, against which White makes a strong prophylactic move.



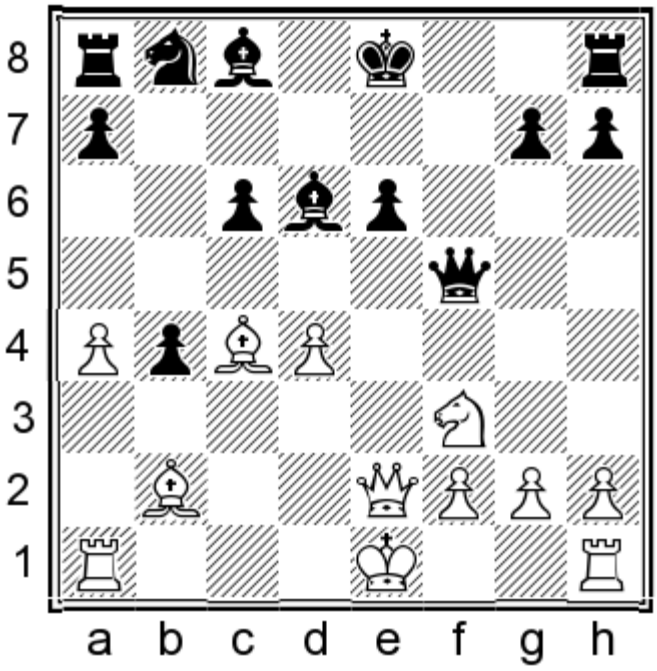
14.♗d3!

White could have forced a draw with 14.♗c2 ♕d5 (*14...cxb2 15.♗xb2 ♕xb2?* does not work because of the small trick of *16.♗g6+! hxg6 17.♕xb2*) 15.♗e4 ♕b3;

14.♘f3 would allow 14...♗a6! 15.♗xc6+ ♘xc6 16.♕xa6 ♕d5 17.0-0 ♗d6 Black completes his development and after 0-0 he obtains a good position.

14...♗a6

Wang Hao continues playing the most direct moves. 14...cxb2 15.♗xb2 ♕d5 is suggested by the machine at first sight, but it has a nice refutation: 16.♘f3 ♗d6 17.♗c4! ♕f5

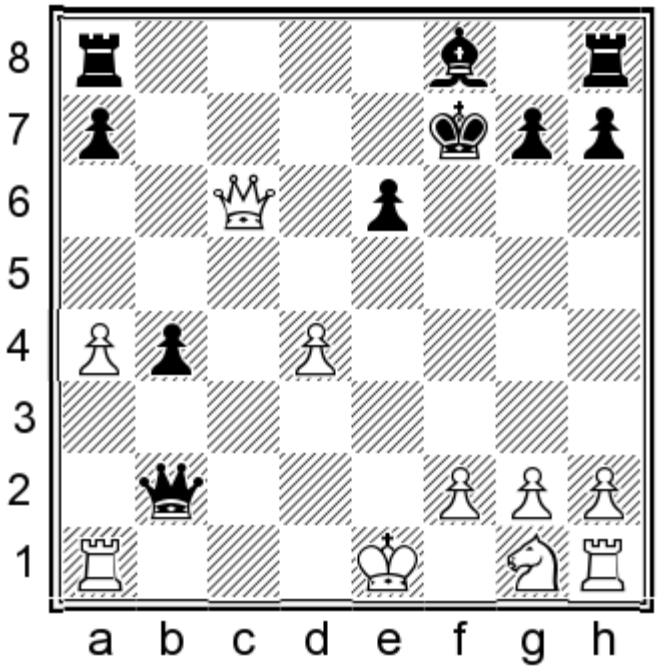


The only place to protect e6, but it moves into 18.d5! cxd5 19.♗xg7 ♖g8 Black cannot cover the d5 pawn, somehow the a8 rook always gets into trouble in this line. (*19...dxc4 20.♗xh8* Black does not have enough compensation, because of his king, which will never find shelter on the board.) 20.♘d4! ♕g6 (*20...♕e4 21.♕xe4 dxe4 22.♘xe6 ♗xe6 23.♗xe6 ♖xg7 24.♗d5!* the rook is trapped.) 21.♗xd5 ♕xg7 22.♖c1! ♗d7 23.♘xe6 with a huge attack.

15.♗xa6 ♘xa6 16.♕xa6!

White has to accept the challenge. Normal developing moves such as 16.♘f3 allow Black a comfortable game. 16...cxb2 17.♗xb2 ♘c7 18.0-0 ♕d5 followed by ...♗d6 and ...0-0.

16...cxb2 17.♕xc6+ ♔f7 18.♗xb2 ♕xb2



19.♖c1!

An important move to prevent ...♕c3, after which the endgame would be slightly better for Black. 19.♖d1 ♕c3+ 20.♕xc3 bxc3∓

19...b3

A logical move. Black would like to play ...♗b4+ and also advance his dangerous passed pawn. White must play precisely in order to avoid any problems.

20.♕b7+!

Mamedyarov realizes that it is not so easy to deal with the forthcoming innocent-looking checks. 20.♘e2? loses to 20...♗b4+ 21.♔f1 ♖hc8 22.♕b7+ ♗e7–+ when Black succeeded in consolidating his pieces and the b-pawn is going to be too strong.

20...♗e7 21.♕f3+!

The king must suddenly march forward, since on the back rank White could take on a8 with check, while ...♗f6 runs

into ♖c7.

21...♔g6 22.♘e2!

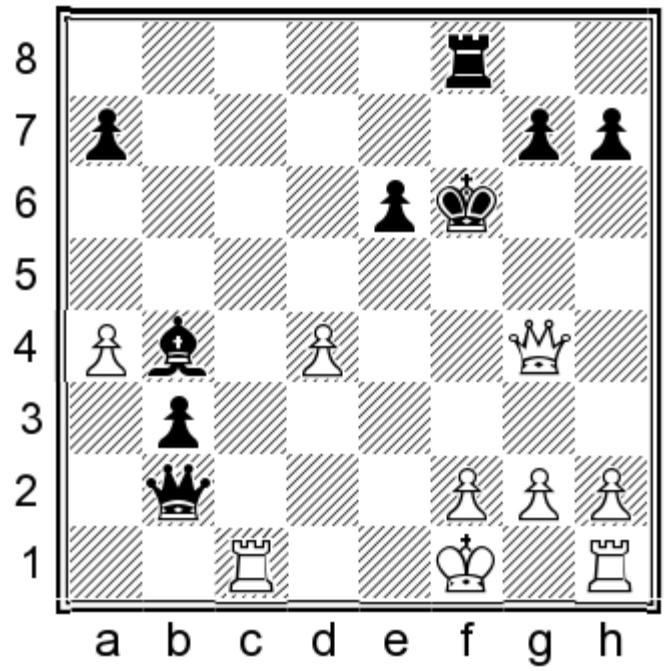
Creating the threat of ♘f4!

22...♖hf8

22...♗b4+ 23.♔f1 ♖hf8 is met by (*23...♗d6 24.h4!* artificially activating the h1 rook and White has a strong attack.) 24.♘f4+! ♖xf4 25.♕xf4 We will check this position in the 23.♘f4 line of the game.

23.♕e4+

It would have been even stronger to play 23.♘f4+! ♖xf4 24.♕xf4 It seems like Black cannot create enough counterplay. 24...♗b4+ otherwise White castles. 25.♔f1 h4-h5 is a threat now. 25...♖f8 26.♕g4+ ♔f6



(*26...♔h6* is refuted by *27.♕xe6+ ♖f6 28.♕e3+* checking back the queen to protect the rook and the f2 pawn. White is winning.) 27.♖c7! and it looks like the game is over. 27...♕b1+ 28.♔e2 ♕b2+ 29.♔f3 Black doesn't have any more checks.

23...♔f7 24.0-0

Mamedyarov finally solved the problems of his king, but this gave Black enough time to fix the co-ordination problems between his rooks.

24...♖ac8 25.d5

25.♖b1 allows 25...♕c2!

25...♕f6!

The only move! All other moves would incurred big material losses.

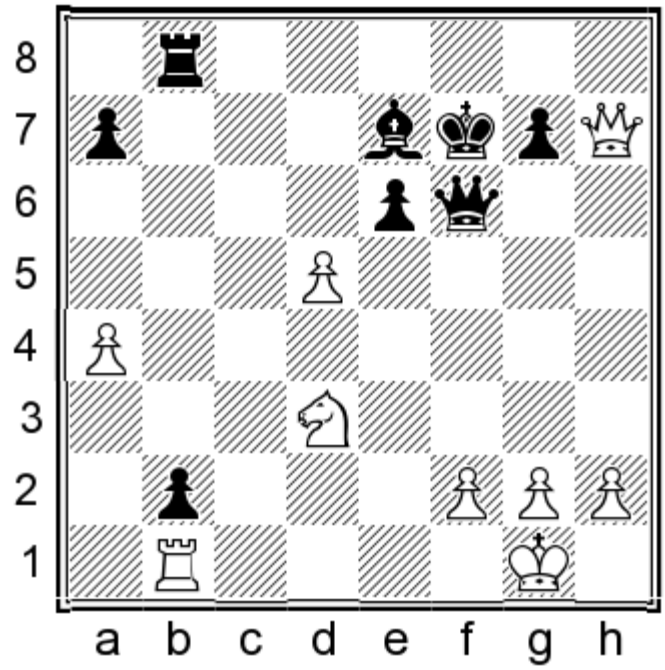
26.♕xh7

White tries to keep the king in the center and prevents ♔g8. Objectively it was better to play 26.♖b1 when Black cannot avoid the loss of the b-pawn, although he retains good compensation. 26...♔g8 27.♖xb3 exd5 28.♕xd5+ ♔h8 The bishop is stronger than the knight and all of Black's pieces are active. It is going to be very difficult to convert the extra pawn.

26...♖xc1 27.♘xc1 ♖b8

27...b2 28.♘d3 ♖b8 leads to the game by transposition.

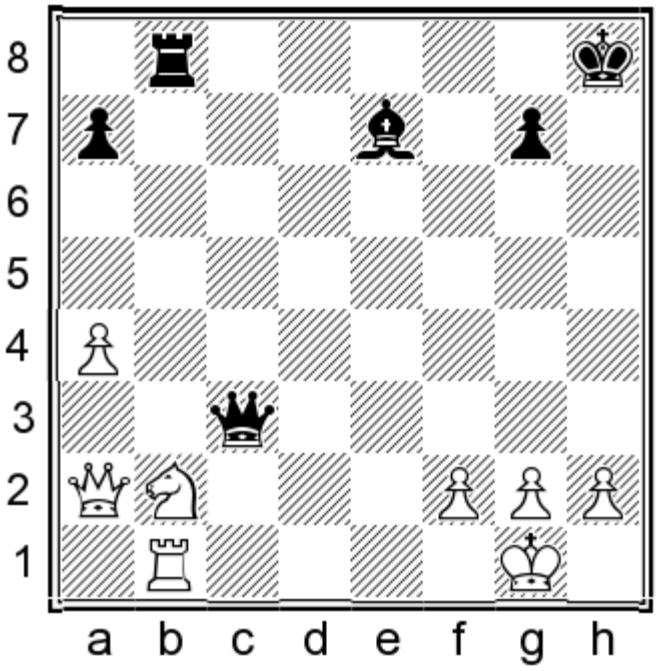
28.♘d3 b2 29.♖b1



At this point, it looks as though Wang Hao got too ambitious about his position due to the b2-pawn and he makes some wrong decisions.

29...♖b3

Black could simply have played 29...exd5 30.♕h5+ ♔g8 31.♕xd5+ ♔h8 followed by ...♗a3. White can hardly be better, since all his pieces must be focused on stopping the b2-pawn. 32.♕a2 does not work because of 32...♖c3! 33.♘xb2



33...♕c2! Pinning all the pieces, followed by ♗f7 winning the knight.

30.g3

Opening the back rank!

30...♗d6?

This is a blunder! It is a very strange decision, or maybe Black just missed that he cannot take back the e6 pawn... 30...exd5 was logical and good. 31.♘f4 ♗a3 With mutual chances.

31.dxe6+ ♔e7

31...♕xe6 32.♖xb2+– Black cannot give up the b2-pawn. 31...♔xe6 32.♕g8+ ♕f7 33.♖e1+ ♔f6 34.♕d8+ wins.

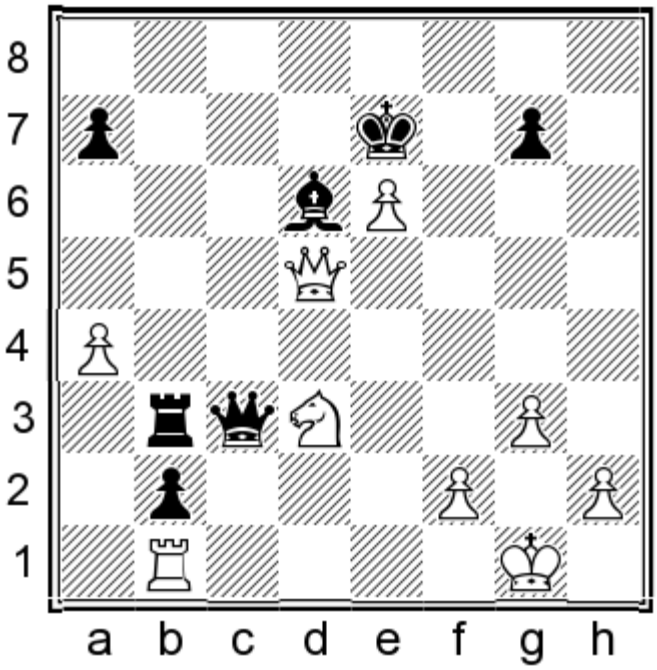
32.♕e4 ♕c3 33.♕f5!

Forcing the black queen back into passivity with the threat of ♕f7-d7 mate.

33...♕f6 34.♕d5!

The b2-pawn could not be taken immediately with 34.♕xf6+ gxf6 35.♘xb2 because of 35...♗e5!

34...♕c3

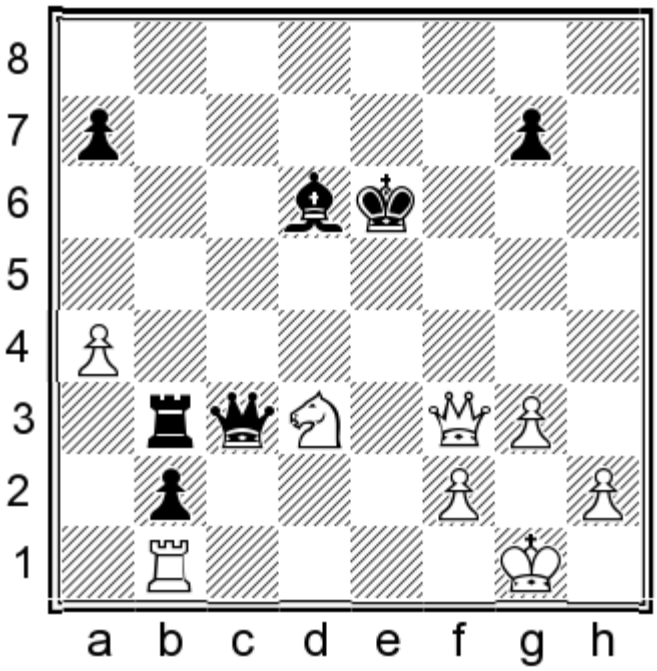


In mutual time-trouble, both players make a mistake. It is understandable that the previous tough position has taken all of their time and the tournament is played without increments... 34...♕xe6 loses to 35.♕d4! and the b2 pawn falls.

35.♕h5?

35.♕f3! was the winning move. 35...♕f6

(35...♔xe6

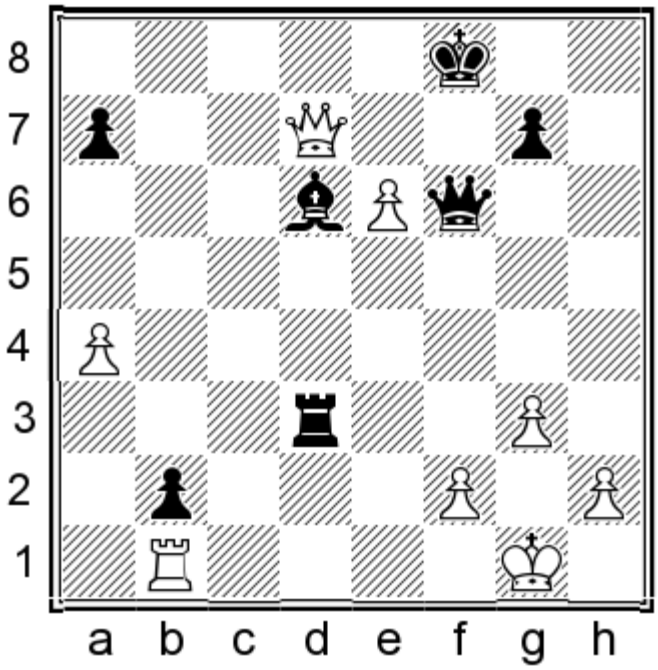


36.♖xb2! is the point 36...♖xb2

(*36...♕xd3 37.♖xb3!* and the queen is protected.)

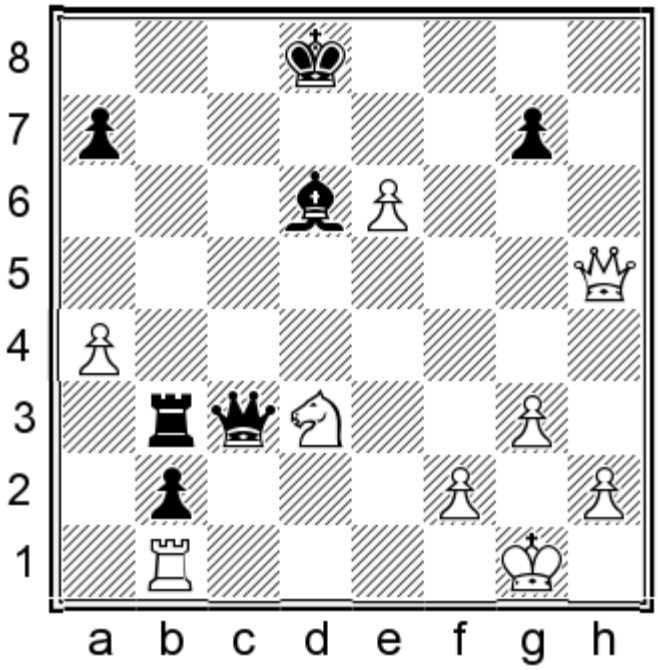
37.♘f4+ wins the queen.)

36.♕c6! ♖xd3 37.♕d7+ ♔f8



38.e7+! White wins the d3-rook and the game. 38...♕xe7 39.♕f5++–

35...♔d8?



Black could have come back into the game with 35...♔xe6! 36.♕e2+ ♔f6 37.♘xb2 (*37.♖xb2* is now met by *37...♕xd3!* which is why the queen should stay on f3, like in the 35.♕f3 line.) 37...♗e5 and Black holds.

36.♘xb2!

Successfully eliminating the strong pawn!

36...♖xb2 37.♖d1

Black resigned in view of the following lines: 37.♖d1 ♖d2 (*37...♔c7 38.♕f7+ ♔c6 39.♕d7++–*) 38.♕g5++– wins the rook.

1–0

GAME 18
F. Caruana (2796)
M. Adams (2740)
41st GM Dortmund GER (3.4)
28.07.2013, [C67]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

A high-quality performance by Adams, who punished Caruana for his mistake in the middle-game with flawless and spectacular play.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5

Adams is a big expert on the Spanish opening with both colors. As Black, he almost always goes for the main lines with 3...a6, but this time he caused a little surprise.

3...♘f6

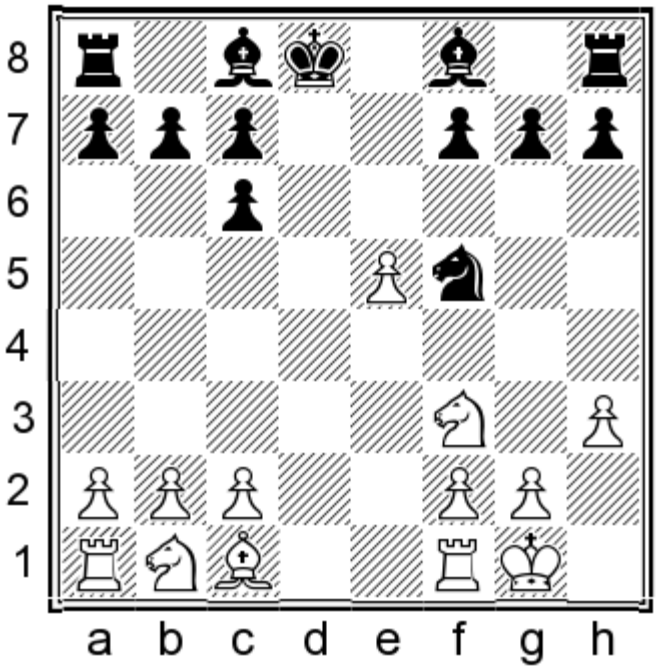
The Berlin Defence. In the second round of the tournament, Adams scored another nice win against Andreikin, where he was playing the same opening as White.

4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♗xc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 ♘f5 8.♕xd8+ ♔xd8

We have reached the starting position of the Berlin endgame.

9.h3

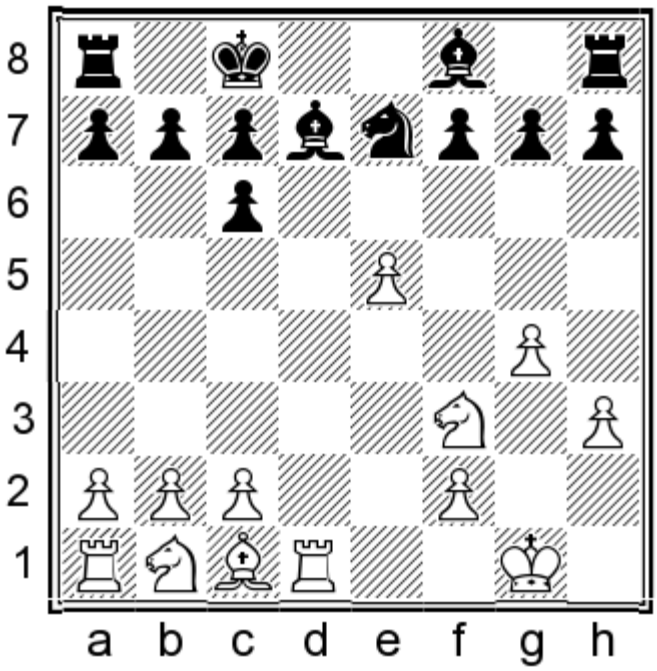
White often prefers this move-order to 9.♘c3 nowadays, which gives some additional aggressive options against the ♗d7 system.



9...♗d7

This is the sharpest handling of the opening, where Black intends to play ♔c8. In the previous round Andreikin played the rock-solid main line with 9...♔e8 10.♘c3 h5 but Adams managed to get some advantage later on...

10.♖d1 ♔c8 11.g4 ♘e7



12.♘g5

This is the point of the 9.h3 start. The g4-pawn is protected and White is able to build up the ideal pawn-structure on the kingside with h3-g4-f4-e5. It is clear that in the long-term White must try to win the game on the kingside, where he

has his extra pawn. On the other hand, his pieces are not developed yet on the queenside, therefore Black can hope to create some quick counterplay with ...h5.

12...♗e8 13.f4 h5!

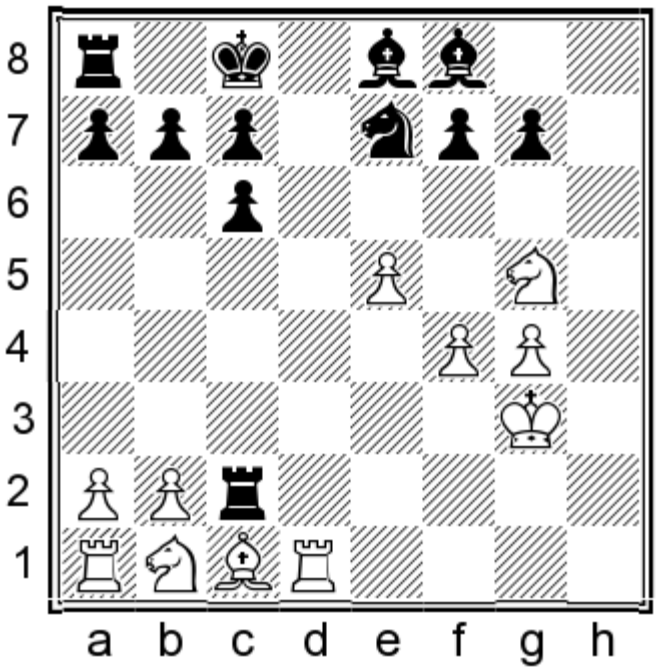
Black immediately starts to seek counterplay.

14.♔f2

This is Caruana's novelty. White intends to protect the g4 pawn with ♔g3 against the ♖h4 attack. He improved on his own game against Kramnik from a few month ago, which continued with 14.f5 hxg4 15.hxg4 ♖h4 16.♔f2 ♖xg4 17.♖h1 ♘xf5 18.♖h8 ♗c5+ 19.♔f3 ♖g1 20.♖xe8+ ♔d7 21.♖xa8 ♘d4+ 22.♔e4 ♖xc1 with extreme complications, where despite the extra rook White is not better. This game was analyzed by Arkadij in the CEWN.

14...b6!

A standard move in this line. Black intends to play ...♔b7 in order to activate the a8-rook. Black could not win a pawn by 14...hxg4 15.hxg4 ♖h2+ 16.♔g3 ♖xc2? Because White suddenly traps the f8 bishop by



17.♘h7! ♘g6 18.f5+– winning a piece.

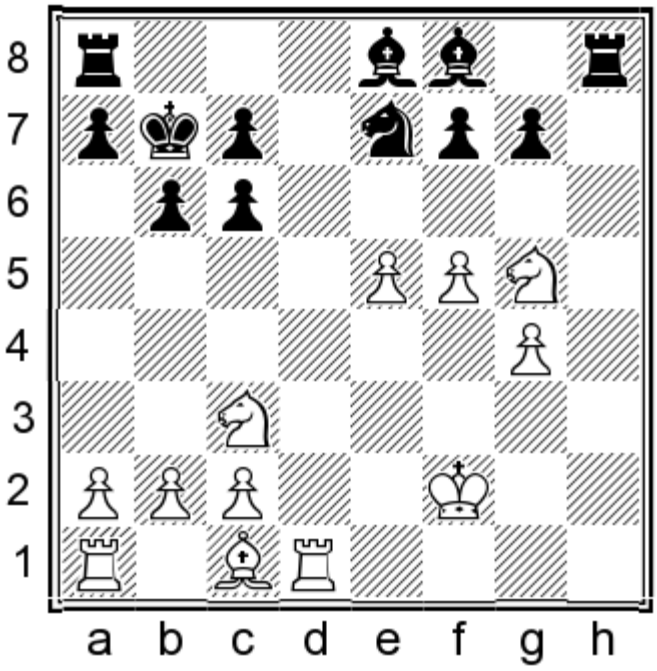
15.f5

White has achieved what he wanted and Black cannot win the g4-pawn as in the Caruana-Kramnik game. However Adams finds another way to gain counterplay...

15...♔b7 16.♘c3

It was time to develop the queenside pieces.

16...hxg4 17.hxg4



After some thinking, Adams came up with an excellent intuitive decision.

17...♖h2+! 18.♔g3 ♖xc2!

Caruana had probably missed this in his preparation. It looks like White is simply winning a piece...

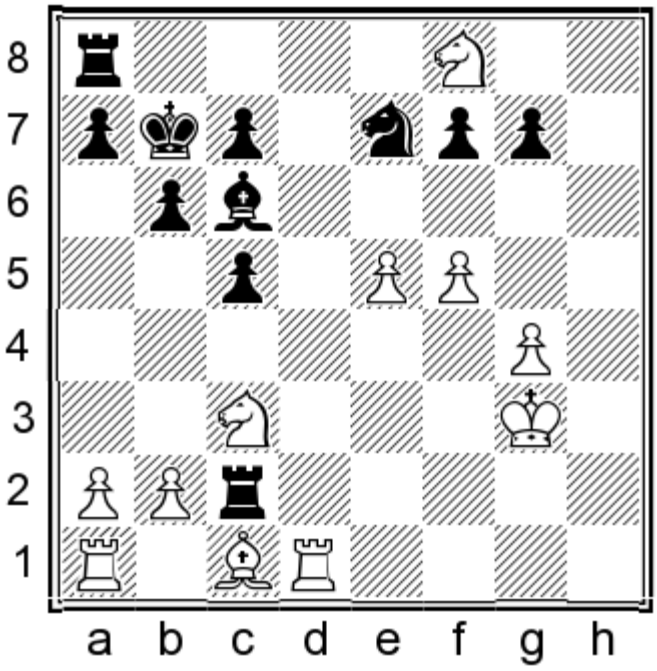
19.♘h7!

Quite an unique way of winning a piece.

19...c5!!

As easy as that! Black simply gives up his bishop, but he gets his other bishop to c6 and stays ready to give annoying checks on the 2nd rank. White has difficulties with escaping from f8 with the knight. Obviously Adams could not calculate all the following lines, but his intuition told him that he should get enough compensation at the end of the day.

20.♘xf8 ♗c6



21.f6?

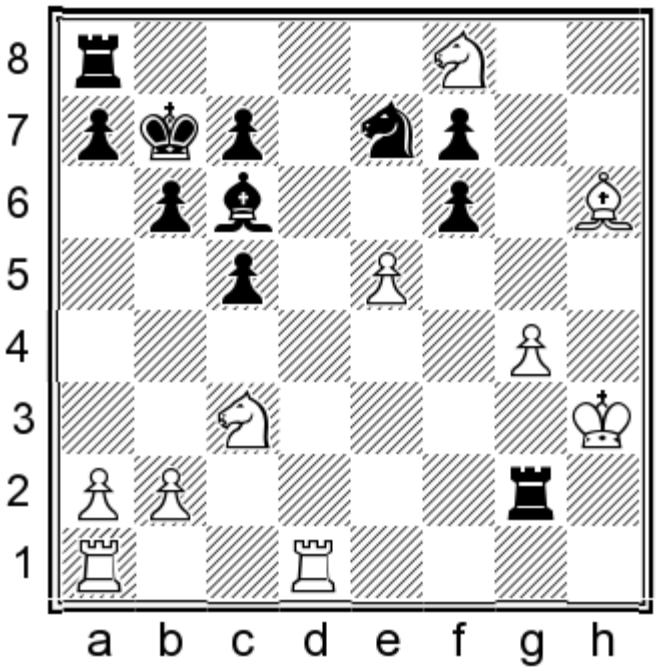
This turns out to be the decisive mistake, but Black is fine in all lines.. 21.♗g5! was the critical move and it seems to lead to a draw by perpetual check: 21...♖g2+ 22.♔f4 (22.♔h3 loses to 22...♘xf5! (Not *22...♖xf8 23.♗xe7 ♖h8+ 24.♗h4* saves White.) 23.gxf5 ♖xg5–+ and Black wins. The knight is trapped as ♖h8 is coming.) 22...♖f2+ 23.♔g3 (23.♔e3 is too risky. 23...♖f3+ 24.♔e2 ♘xf5! 25.gxf5 ♖xf5 Black takes a piece back and he is going to have too many pawns for the remaining piece down. 26.♘h7 (*26.♗e7? ♖xe5+*) 26...♖h8∓) 23...♖g2;

On 21.♘h7 ♖g2+ 22.♔f4 ♖h8 23.♘g5 ♖h4–+ wins.;

21.♘d7 is met by 21...♖g2+ 22.♔f4 ♖h8 with ideas of ...♖h4 or ...♖h3-f3. 23.♖d2 White must try to kick out the g2-rook, but it leaves the d7-knight unprotected. (*23.♗e3 ♖h4*–+) 23...♖g1 24.♖d1 ♖xd1 25.♘xc5+ bxc5 26.♘xd1 Black is better after 26...♘d5+ 27.♔g3 ♖h1∓ because White's pieces are poorly placed.

21...♖g2+! 22.♔f4

22.♔h3 is met by 22...gxf6 23.♗h6



(*23.exf6?* ♖*xf8 24.fxe7* ♖*h8*+–+) 23...f5! Black seems to get a winning advantage. 24.g5 (*24.gxf5* ♘*xf5*–+) 24...f4∓ ♘f5 is coming next, with the idea of taking on h6 and then on f8. White can hardly prevent it...

22...gxf6!

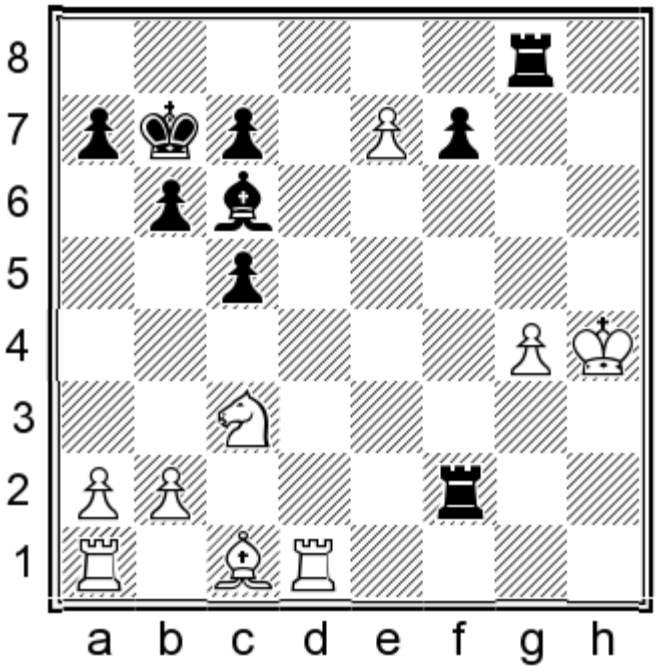
Adams could have forced a perpetual by playing 22...♖f2+ 23.♔g3 ♖g2+ but he correctly judges his chances and plays on!

23.exf6

23.♘h7 leads to nice mates after 23...♘g6+! 24.♔f5 (*24.*♔*e3* ♖*h8 25.*♘*xf6* ♖*h3#*) 24...♖f2+–+

23...♖f2+ 24.♔e3

White gets mated after 24.♔g5 ♖xf8 25.fxe7 ♖g8+ 26.♔h4



26...♖g2! With the simple threat of taking on g4. 27.♗g5 closes the king's route to g5 after (27.♗h6 ♖2xg4+ 28.♔h3 (*28.♔h5 ♗f3*–+) 28...♗g2+ 29.♔h2 ♗f3 30.♔h3 ♖h8–+ with mate to follow.) 27...♖h8+ 28.♗h6 ♖xh6+ 29.♔g5 ♖g6+–+;

24.♔e5? finishes the game quickly as after 24...♖e8! the mate is inevitable.;

24.♔g3 loses to 24...♖xf6 25.♗g5 (*25.♘h7 ♖f3+ 26.♔h2 ♖h8*–+) 25...♖f3+ 26.♔h4 ♖xf8 27.♗xe7 ♖h8+ 28.♔g5 ♖g8+ 29.♔h4 f6 with the threat of ...♖h8 mate. White needs to give up his bishop for the f6-pawn, but then he is just lost on material alone... 30.♖d8 ♖g7! 31.♗xf6 ♖xf6–+

24...♖xf6

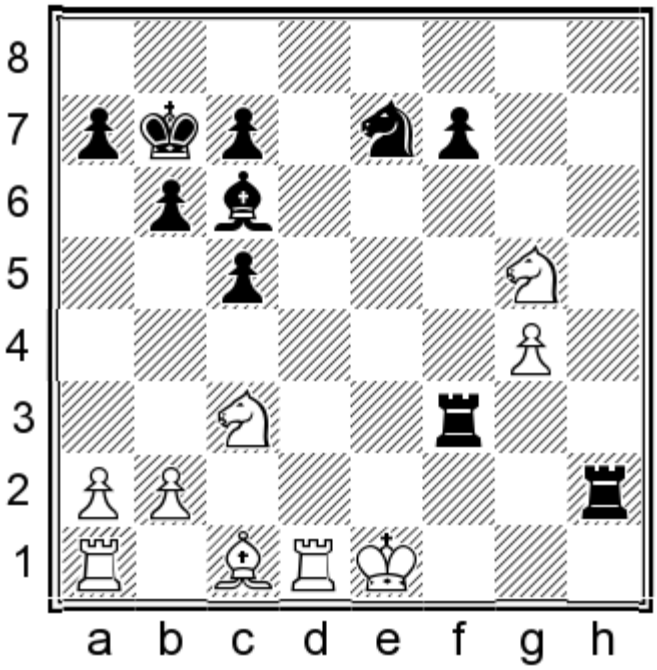
White's king is facing huge danger in the middle of the board and he should also try to save his knight, which is just too much for him...

25.♘h7

On 25.♘d7 Black wins after 25...♖f3+ 26.♔e2 ♖e8–+

25...♖f3+ 26.♔d2

If 26.♔e2 then Black has several wins here, the easiest being 26...♖h8 27.♘g5 ♖h2+ 28.♔e1

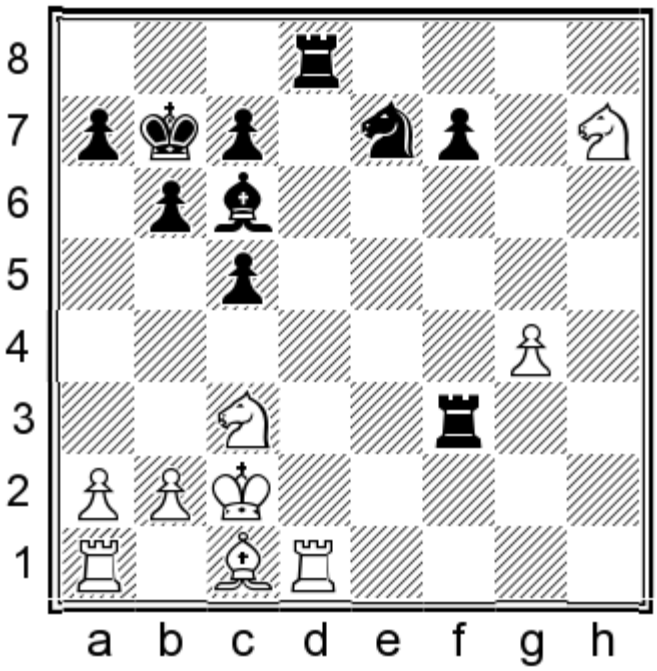


28...♖ff2! With the idea of ...♖fg2 followed by mate on the 1st rank. 29.♖d2 prevents it, but it drops the a1 rook... 29...♖xd2 30.♗xd2 ♖h1+ 31.♔f2 ♖xa1–+

26...♖d8+!

Adams continues to play with extreme precision! The tempting 26...♖h8 would have allowed White chances for survival with 27.♖e1! A strong intermediate move, with the idea to play ♘g5 next and to have ♖e2 against the checks...

27.♔c2



27.♔e2 transposes to 26.♔e2 27...♖h8–+

27...♖xc3+!

The final point! Black wins back the piece and he ends up with some extra pawns and better pieces.

28.bxc3 ♗a4+ 29.♔b2 ♖xd1–+

The game is over. The rest is only a matter of technique.

30.♗g5 ♘c6 31.♖xd1

31.♘f6 ♘e5–+ Because of the mate threat with ...♘c4, White is forced to take on d1, but then he cannot protect the g4 pawn.

31...♗xd1 32.♗f4

32.♘f6 ♘e5–+

32...♗xg4 33.♘f6

♘e8 is coming next. Caruana wins back a pawn with this nice motif, but there will still be too many pawns for Black...

33...♗f3 34.♘e8 ♘a5 35.♘xc7 ♗c6!

The knight is trapped. White could have resigned here, but he prolonged it with some moves...

36.♔c2 ♔c8 37.♔d3 ♔d7 38.♔c2 ♘c4

Black wants to play ...♘d6 in order to trap the knight.

39.♘a6 ♗b7 40.♘b8+ ♔c8

The maneuver did not help and the knight remains trapped.

41.♔d3 b5

White resigned in view of f6-♘e5. A great game by Adams!

0–1

GAME 19
I. Cheparinov (2678)
E. Sutovsky (2660)
14th Karpov GM
Poikovsky RUS (9.5)
06.09.2013, [A15]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

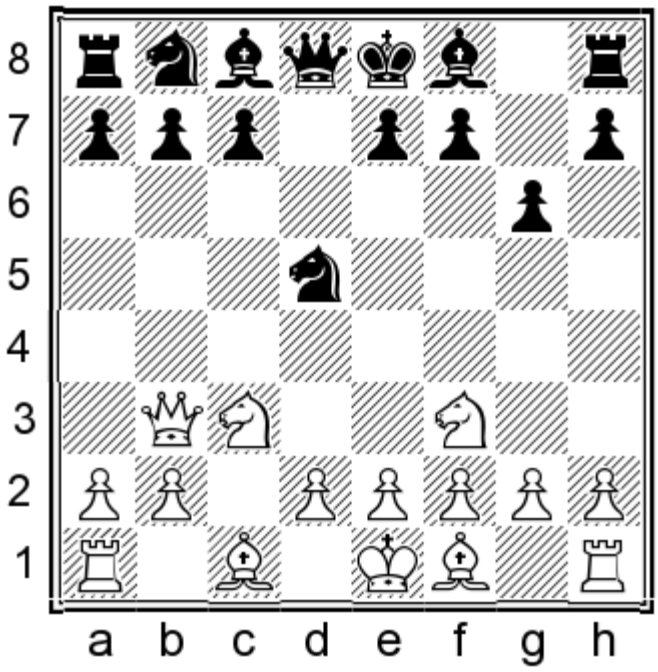
Ivan Cheparinov, Topalov's main second, was clearly out of form in the Poikovsky tournament, but in the last round he managed to catch his Gruenfeld-expert opponent with some huge theoretical preparation.

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3

White is aiming for the Anti-Gruenfeld. By sparing the d2-d4 move White gains many interesting extra possibilities. If

Black wants to play the Gruenfeld, he must push d5 now, otherwise after 3...♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4, we transpose to the King's Indian Defence.

3...d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♕b3



5...♘b6

One point of sparing the d4 move can be seen here, in that after 5...♘xc3 White has 6.♕xc3! attacking the rook, when Black is forced to make some huge structural weakening like ...f6.

6.d4 ♗g7 7.e4

White had many interesting alternatives here; 7.♗f4 and 7.♗g5 also deserve attention.

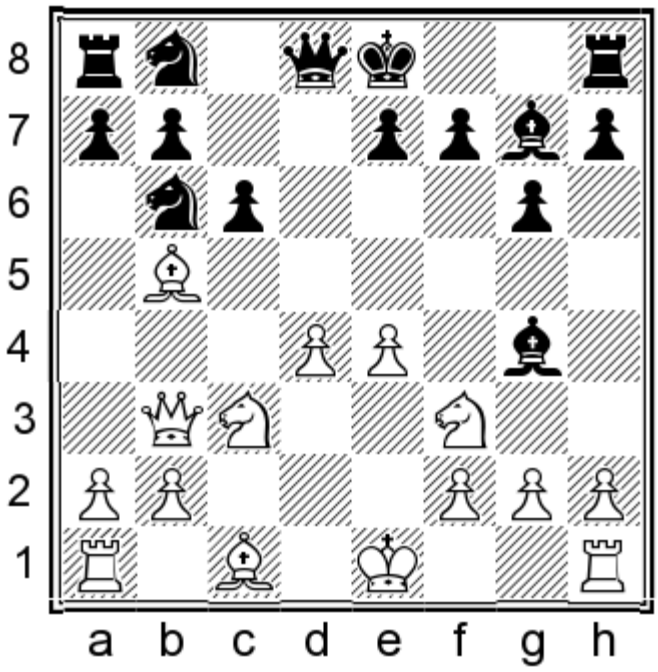
7...♗g4

A typical Gruenfeld move. By delaying castling, Black immediately starts to put pressure on the central pawns. The following play is very direct and more-or-less forced by White to consolidate his d4 pawn.

8.♗b5+!

Preventing Black from developing his knight to c6 and further pressing the d4 pawn, since ...♘c6 could be met by d5 now.

8...c6



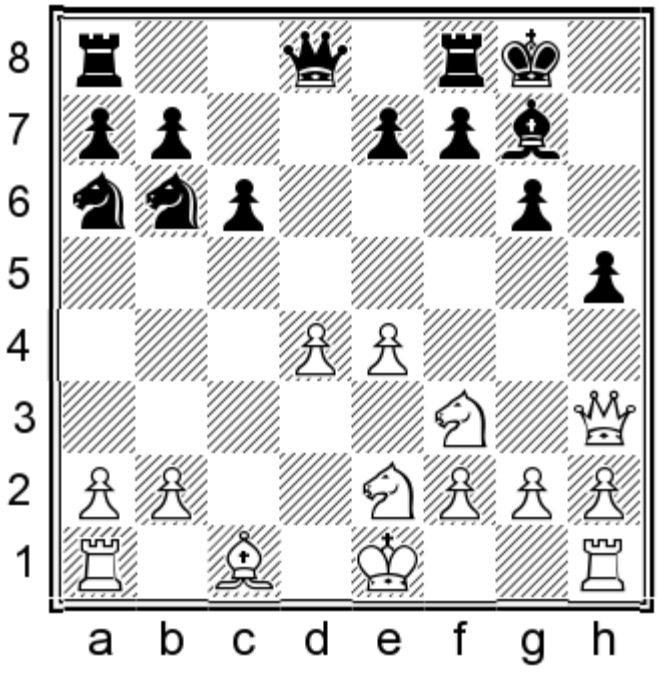
9.♘g5!

White avoids the loss of the d4-pawn by this concrete operation, and all these things are already known -from a theoretical point of view — since 3 years ago.

9...0-0 10.♗e2 ♗xe2 11.♘xe2 ♘a6

Sutovsky follows his own games against Jakovenko and Fressinet. 11...♗xd4? does not work because of 12.♕h3 h5 13.g4! and Black has no good defence!

12.♕h3 h6 13.♘f3 h5



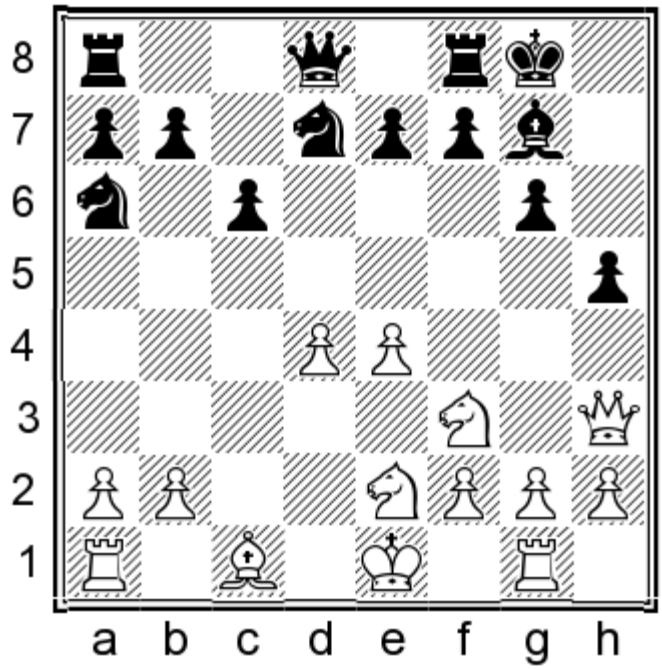
Arkadij analysed the Navara-Ris game in the CEWN, which continued with 13...♕d7 14.♕h4 g5 15.♗xg5! hxg5 16.♘xg5 and White later won with a crushing attack.

14.♖g1!

Quite an extraordinary idea, but this is the only way to fight for the initiative. White is aiming for a kingside attack with g4! With the simple 0-0, White could not hope for an advantage with his misplaced queen on h3.

14...♘d7

A multifunctional move. The main idea is to bring a defender around to the king by playing ...♘f6, and the move also supports the central break with e5, which is fully justified by the principles that against a wing attack one must open the center.



15.e5

Only this is the novelty and the start of Cheparinov's homework. White prevents ...♘f6 and intends to push g4 next! The precedent continued with 15.g4 ♘f6 16.♘g5 hxg4 17.♖xg4 ♕c8 without the queens Black would be more than fine. 18.f3! ♖d8 freeing the f8-square for the king. 19.e5 ♘xg4 20.fxg4 f6 21.♕h7+ ♔f8 and the game finished with a forced perpetual check after 22.♕xg6 fxg5 23.e6 ♔g8 24.♗xg5 ♖d5 25.♕f7+ ♔h8 26.♕h5+ ♔g8 27.♕f7+ ♔h8 28.♕h5+ ♔g8 29.♕f7+ 1/2 Jakovenko-Sutovsky, Loo 2013

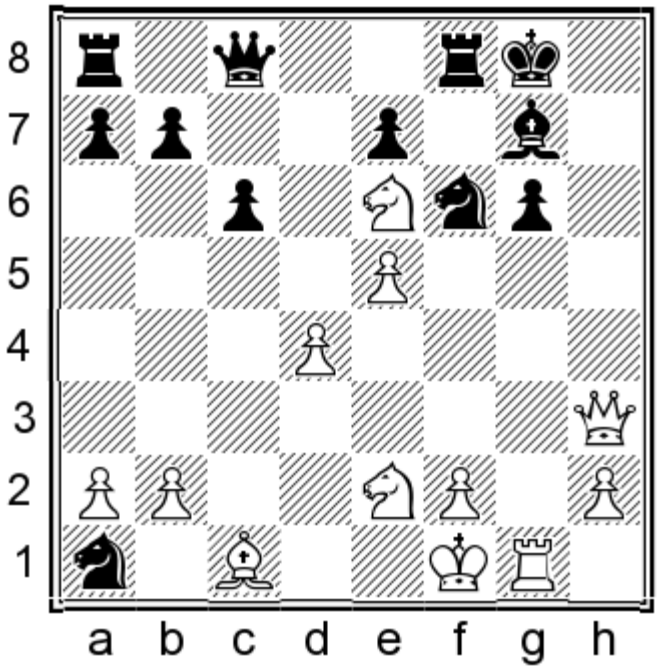
15...♘b4 16.g4!

A strong human move! Obviously mate has higher value than the a1-rook. There was a tactical point as well, that after 16.♔f1 (removing itself from the ...♘c2 threat) Black collects the nicest pawn with 16...♘xe5! 17.dxe5 ♕d1+ 18.♘e1 ♘c2–+ utilising White's weak back rank.

16...♘c2+ 17.♔f1 ♘xe5

Black uses the same tactical motif as before, after ...♕d1 check he wins back the e2 knight. I am quite convinced that Sutovsky was also still following his preparation at this point. 17...♘xa1 leads to a quick defeat after 18.gxh5 as Black

cannot defend, let’s say after 18...♕c8 aiming for the trade of queens 19.hxg6 fxg6 20.♘g5 ♘f6 21.♘e6!



♖xg6 comes with a mating attack: 21...♔f7 22.♘2f4 ♖h8 23.♕d3 ♖h6 24.♖xg6+–

18.♘xe5!

White loses too many attacking pieces and also closes the g-file after 18.dxe5? ♕d1+ 19.♔g2 ♕xe2 20.gxh5 ♘xa1–+ White has no serious attack here, hxg6 just opens the f-file for the rook.

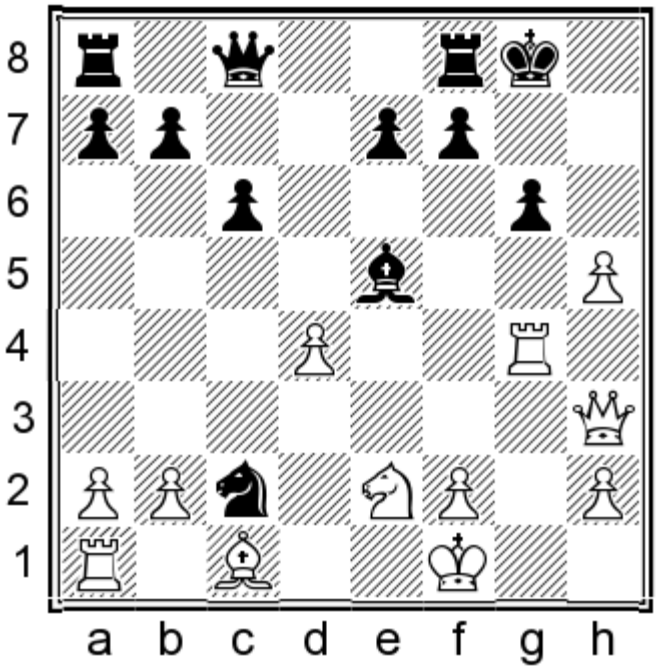
18...♗xe5 19.gxh5

It seems to be over, but Black has a nice defensive idea, which keeps him in the game... 19.dxe5? is bad again because of 19...♕d1+ 20.♔g2 ♕xe2–+

19...♕c8!

Bringing the queen to the defence.

20.♖g4!



20.♕h4 is met by 20...♗f6 21.♗g5 ♕f5 and Black is alright.

20...♕f5!

Black sacrifices his bishop and suddenly he starts a strong counterattack. 20...♘xa1 still loses to 21.dxe5 ♕f5 22.hxg6 fxg6 23.♘f4 ♔f7 24.♘xg6+– and White ends up with a material advantage because of the threats ♘xf8 and ♖f4.

21.dxe5 ♖ad8!

I suspect that Sutovsky's home analysis finished somewhere around here, as the computer shows 0.00, perpetual checks or good positions everywhere. He gets enough counterplay with the ideas of ...♖d1 and ...♘e1. However Cheparinov dug deeper.

22.hxg6 ♖d1+

22...fxg6! seems to lead to a draw in long lines and is also Black's most precise move. 23.♘f4 ♖d1+ 24.♔e2 is the most forced continuation.

(24.♔g2 ♕e4+ 25.f3 ♘e1+ White has to be careful here. 26.♔g3! This is the only move that saves the game.

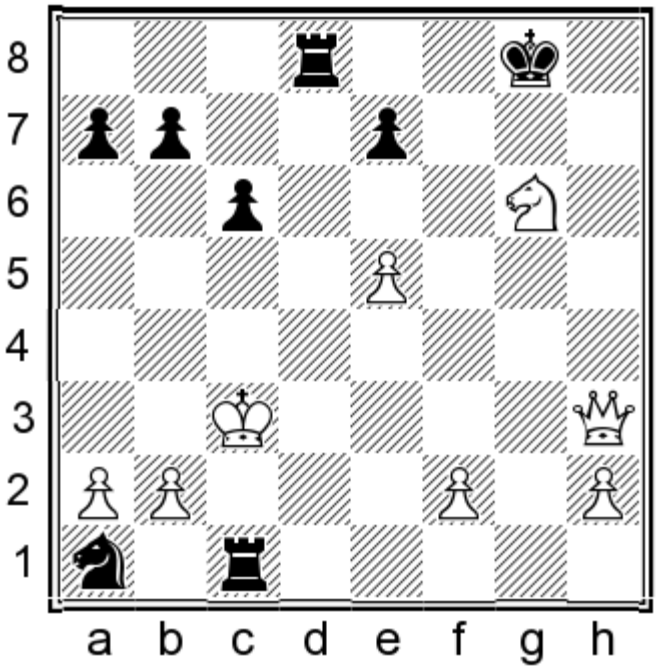
(*26.♔f2?* is refuted by a pretty mate: *26...♖xf4! 27.♖xf4 ♘d3+ 28.♔g3 ♖g1+ 29.♔h4 g5+ 30.♔h5 ♕h7#*)

26...♕xf3+

(*26...♖d3!?* is probably even better: *27.♖xg6+ ♕xg6+ 28.♘xg6 ♖fxf3+ 29.♔g4 ♖xh3 30.♘xe7+ ♔f7 31.♗g5* At this point, Black does not have anything better than *31...♖xh2 32.♖xe1 ♖g2+ 33.♔f4 ♖xg5 34.♔xg5 ♔xe7 35.♖h1=* and a draw will be agreed soon.)

27.♔h4 ♖xf4 28.♗xf4 ♕xh3+ 29.♔xh3 ♖xa1 30.♖xg6+ ♔f7 31.♖g1 ♘c2 32.♖xa1 ♘xa1= The knight escapes via c2 and the game will be drawn.)

24...♖e1+ 25.♔d2 ♖d8+ 26.♔c3 ♘xa1 27.♖xg6+ ♕xg6 28.♘xg6 ♖xc1+



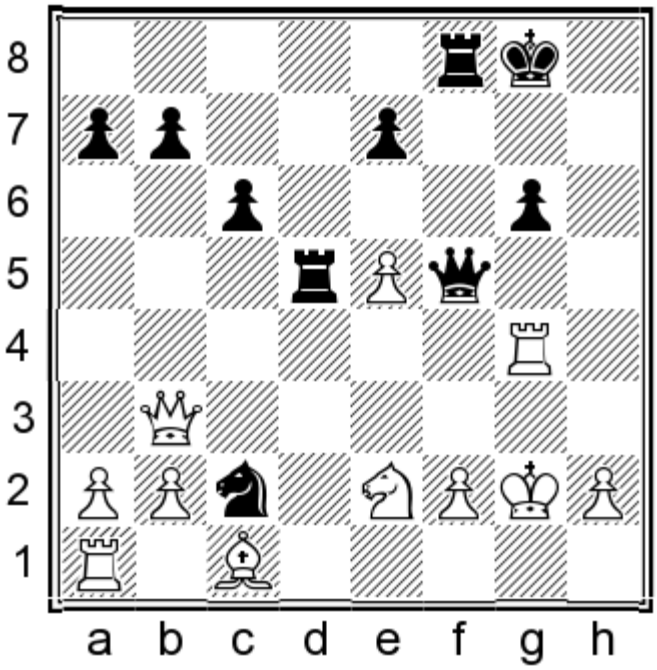
29.♔b4 and Black gives perpetual check after 29...♖d4+ 30.♔a3 ♘c2+ 31.♔b3 ♘a1.

23.♔g2 ♘e1+?

This extremely tempting move seems to be the decisive mistake. 23...fxg6! 24.♕b3+

(*24.♘f4* transposes to the 22...fxg6 lines.)

24...♖d5! The only move!



(*24...♔g7* loses to *25.♗h6+! ♔xh6 26.♕h3+ ♔g7 27.♖xd1 ♕xf2+ 28.♔h1+–* With a decisive material advantage. *24...♖f7? 25.♖f4! ♕g5+ 26.♘g3 ♘e1+ 27.♔h3!+–* also wins for White.)

25.♕g3 ♘xa1 26.♘f4! This move seems to keep the initiative on White's side.

(*26.*♖*xg6+* ♔*f7 27.e6+* ♔*e8 28.*♘*c3* ♖*d3 29.*♕*b8+* ♖*d8 30.*♕*g3* As White threatens to play ♗h6 and ♖g8, Black should force a draw by repetition. *30...*♖*d3 31.*♕*b8*±)

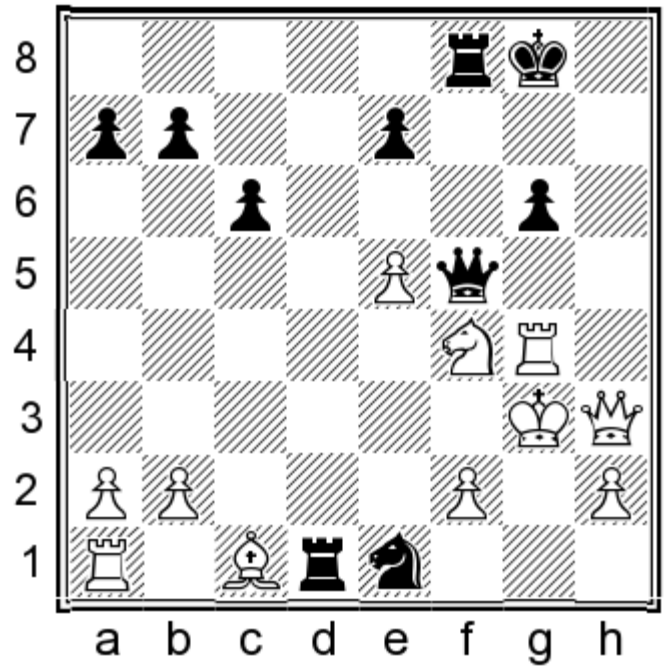
26...♕e4+ 27.♔h3 ♕xe5 28.♘xg6 ♕xg3+ 29.fxg3 White has some advantage, because he wins back the exchange in any case and then the h- and g-pawns are going to be very dangerous, and the bishop will also be superior to the knight. 29...♖h5+ 30.♔g2± Black loses the exchange anyway, now because of the ♘f4 threat.

24.♔g3

The start of a brave rush. Cheparinov had still made all his moves without thinking! An impressive piece of preparation!

24...♕f3+

24...♖d3+? 25.♗e3 ♕xe5+ 26.♖f4+– White has an extra piece. 24...fxg6 25.♘f4!+– also wins for White.

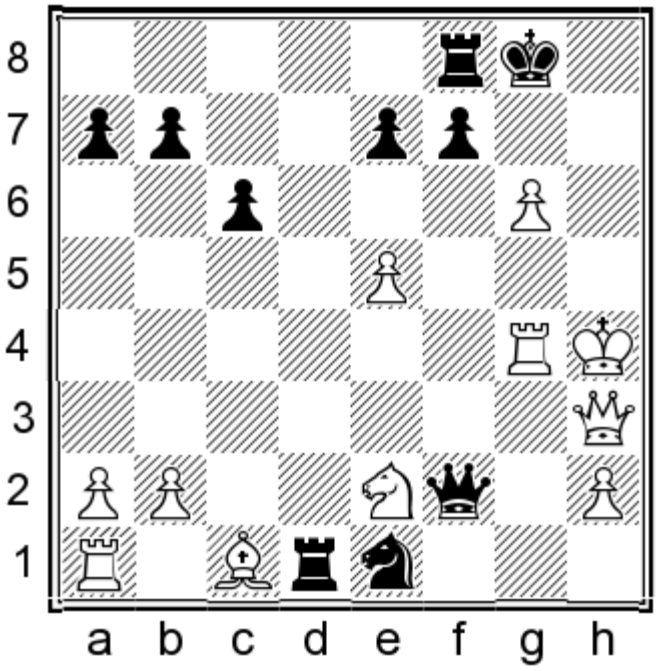


24...♕xe5+ leads to a bad endgame: 25.f4! ♖d3+ 26.♔f2! ♕xe2+ (*26...*♖*xh3 27.fxe5+*–) 27.♔xe2 ♖xh3 28.♔xe1 ♖xh2± Black has some practical chances to save the game, but with good technique White should be winning later on.

25.♔h4

There is no way back!

25...♕xf2+



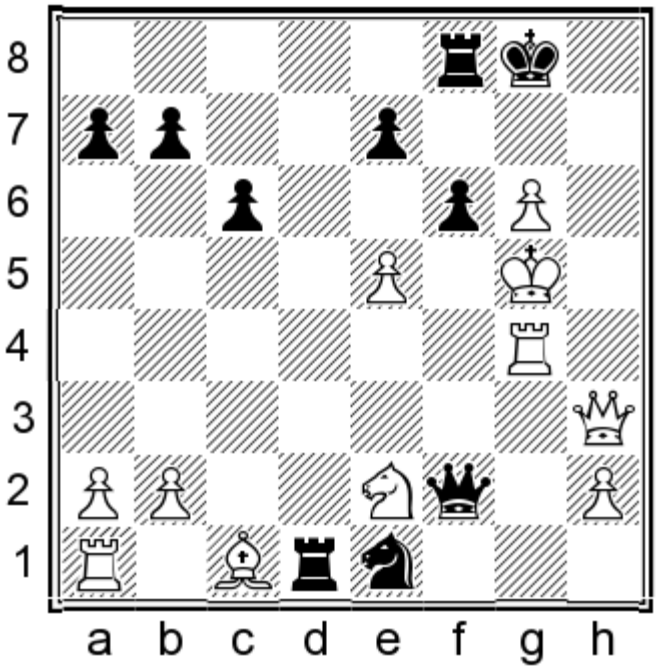
This was the first moment where Cheparinov paused, spending some 30 minutes, but then he found the winning continuation.

26.♔g5!!

An amazing journey of the king! White creates the threat of ♕h7. 26.♘g3 was tempting, but Black is fine after 26...fxg6 27.♖xg6+ ♔f7⇄

26...f6+?

This eases White's task.



26...♘f3+ would have given Black some chances. 27.♔h6 fxg6 28.♖xg6+ ♔f7 Obviously it is not easy to play with a

king on h6 over the board, but the computer does not stress himself and converts his piece advantage after 29.♖g7+! covering the ♖h8 threat with ♖h7 29...♔e8 30.♕h5+ ♔d8 31.♘f4 ♖h8+ 32.♖h7 ♖xh7+ 33.♔xh7 and White is winning according to the machine, although in a practical game all results are still possible.

27.♔h6!

Black's attack has reached its end. He cannot give even a single check, while White has an extra piece — and a check on e6 with the queen is also hanging in the air.

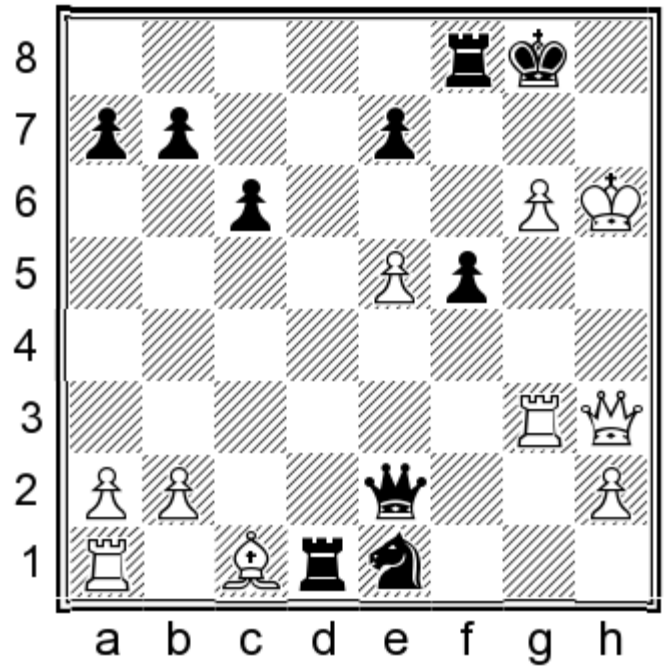
27...f5

27...♕xe2 is refuted most elegantly by 28.♖e4! ♕xe4 29.♕e6+ ♔h8 30.g7#

28.♖g3!

The most precise move to cover the f3-square.

28...♕xe2



29.♔g5!

This is the reason behind ♖g3; Black does not have ...♘f3, nor any other checks, and on the other hand ♕h7 can only be avoided by a huge loss of material. The game is over, but Sutovsky tries for a few more moves.

29...♖f7 30.gxf7+ ♔xf7 31.♕xf5+ ♔e8

Obviously all moves are winning with an extra rook and a mating attack, but White finishes the game in style.

32.♗f4! ♖xa1 33.e6!

And as mate is inevitable, Black resigned! A fascinating game, but from a theoretical point of view it just seems like a one-game-idea, since after 22...fxg6 it ends in a forced draw.

1–0

GAME 20
F. Caruana (2779)
Wang Hao (2733)
7th Kings Tournament
Bucharest ROU (9)
15.10.2013, [C42]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Caruana has been playing really great chess lately and it was no different in the Bazna Kings tournament. We are in the 9th round and Caruana was already leading the event with a 1.5 point advantage. In this game, there was more pressure on Caruana than just the tournament victory, as in case of a win he would cross the 2800 mark for the first time in the live rating list. He was so close — before making a mistake and letting Wang Hao take control of the game.

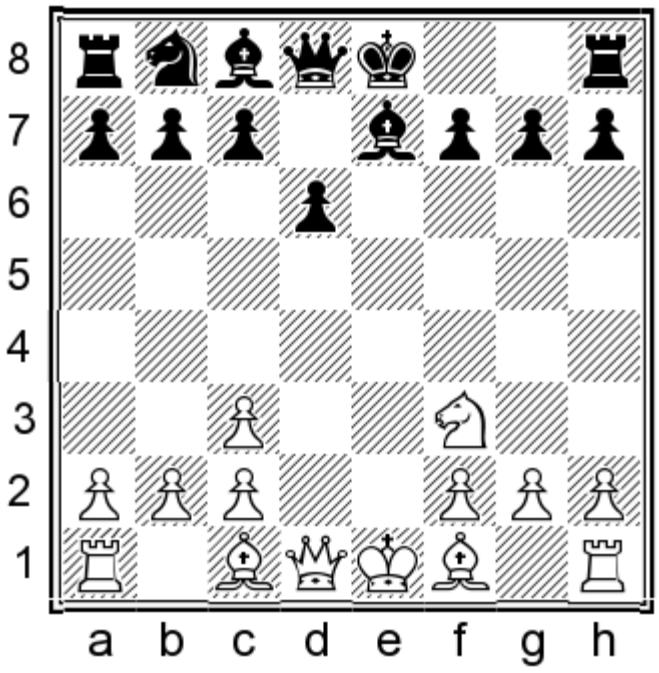
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6

Somehow, in recent games, the Petroff is back. For many years it was played by Gelfand and Kramnik and was solid as a rock. Then both Gelfand and Kramnik switched to the Sicilian and Berlin — and the Petroff was left alone.

3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3

One of the most popular lines, which has been played a lot by Karjakin for example.

5...♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♗e7



7.♗e3

White’s idea in this line is to castle queenside and launch quick play on the kingside against the black king. On the other hand, Black’s position is very solid.

7...0-0 8.♕d2 b6

A rare move. Usually Black plays 8...♘c6, which also looks like the most logical move to me.

9.0-0-0 ♗b7 10.♘d4!

A very nice move. White quickly realizes that by developing the bishop to b7, Black has weakened the f5 square, which is a very nice tagrget for the white knight.

10...♘c6!

A nice reply by Black. Wang Hao is planning to get the rid of the white knight on f5 by playing ♘e7 in the future.

11.♘f5 ♗f6 12.♘g3

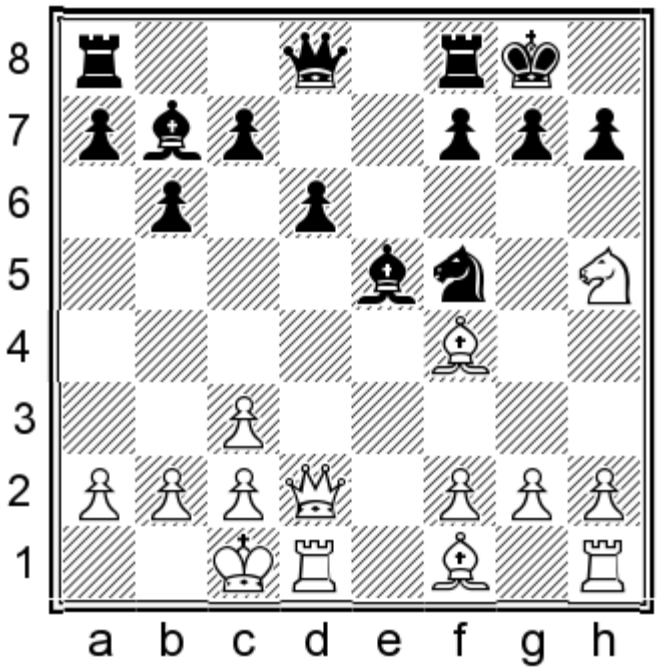
12.h4 also looks like a possible way to play for White.

12...♘e7 13.♘h5 ♘f5 14.♗f4

The most fighting move from White. White could also just have played the simple 14.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 15.♗f4 and I think that thanks to the bishop pair White's position should be slightly better.

14...♗e5

White has to give up the bishop pair.



15.h4!

A very typical move. White's idea could also be to play ♖h3 next.

15...g6

15...f6 16.♗d3 again with a nice position for White.

16.♗d3!

White is aiming for complications and this is absolutely the right decision.

16...gxh5 17.♗xf5 ♕f6 18.♗xe5 dxe5 19.♗d3

So some exchanges have been made and we have to take a fresh look at the position. Things are pretty complicated, but the position of the white king is much safer than Black's one, and in the future White could maybe combine play on the queenside with his attacking chances. All-in-all White should be better here.

19...♔g7

A solid move as the king will be better placed on g7 than on g8 anyway.

20.♕e2

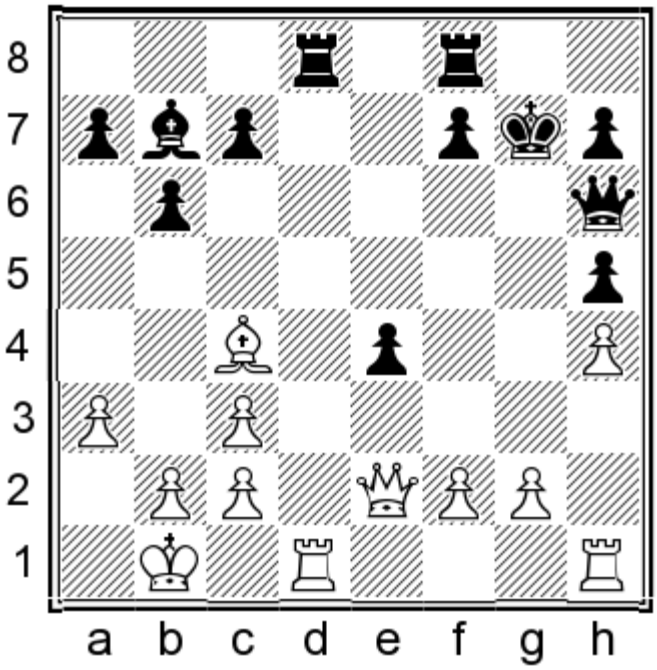
White attacks the h5-pawn and thereby forces the black queen to take up a bad position on h6.

20...e4 21.♗c4 ♕h6+ 22.♔b1 ♖ad8

Now White has a wide range of nice moves.

23.a3

Caruana does not hurry to launch the final action.



23.g4!? also looks interesting.

23...f5

Black has consolidated his position a little bit.

24.♗b3

White wants to keep another attacking option open, to play ♕c4 at some point.

24...♔g6?

A very strange move. Black kills his own queen on h6. 24...c5 looks much more solid, with pretty unclear play.

25.♖h3!

A very nice move. White provokes Black into playing ...f4, which will weaken the structure.

25...f4 26.♖xd8

26.g4 immediately also looks interesting.

26...♖xd8 27.g4

The black king is in big danger!

27...c5

This move is needed to protect against White's ♕c4.

28.♖h1

A very natural move. White brings his rook back into play.

28...f3

White was threatening to play gxh5 and ♖g1.

29.♕c4 ♗d5

Black is just about holding things together with only moves !

30.♕a4 ♗xb3 31.cxb3

White is threatening to play ♕xe4 or ♕c6.

31...♕f4

Once again Black finds one of the only moves!

32.♖e1?!

This move looks strong, but it gives Black enough time to escape. 32.♕c6+! would present Black with big problems... 32...♔f7 33.♕b7+ ♔f8 34.gxh5 and White should be much better here.

32...hxg4!

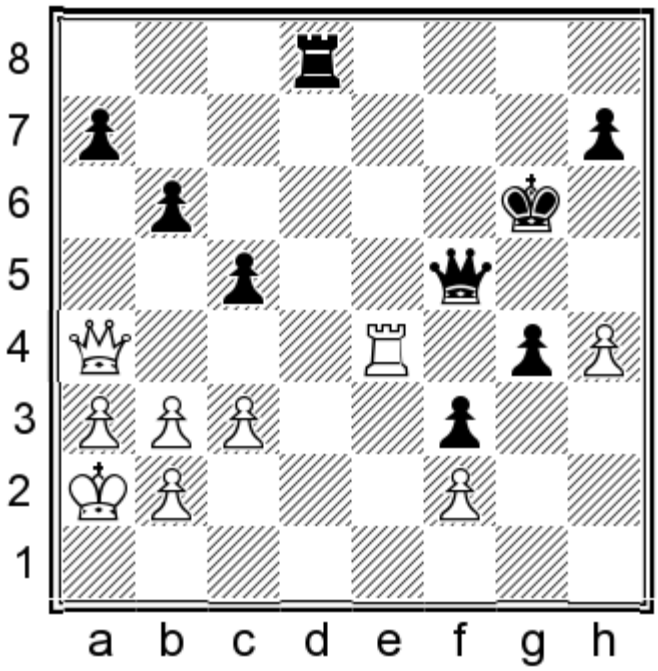
Wang Hao doesn't miss his chance.

33.♖xe4 ♕f5

Winning a tempo by pinning the white rook.

34.♔a2

And here comes the fantastic



34...♔h5!!

The black king is not only defending the g4-pawn, but it will soon become the main piece of Black's play.

35.♖e1 h6

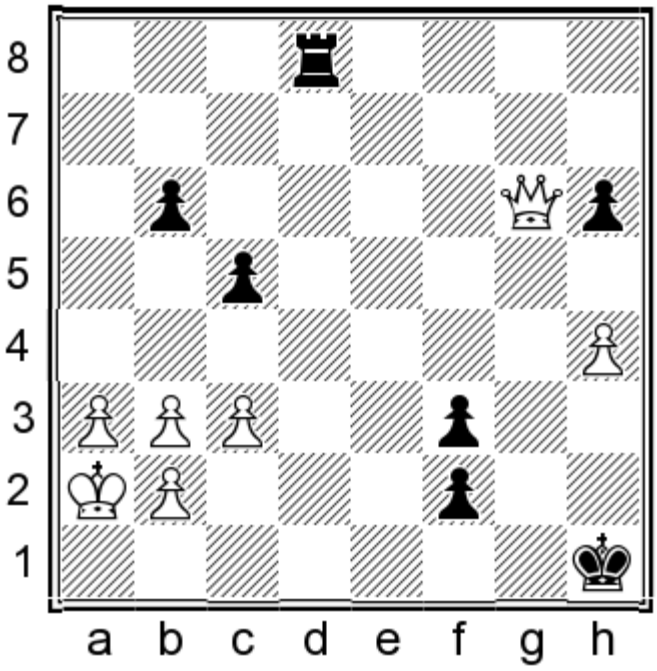
Not the best move, but both players were probably already in time-trouble.

36.♕xa7 g3!

This was Black's key idea! His king is going to h3 and g2 via g4!

37.fxg3?!

White missed his chance to make a draw by playing 37.♕g7 gxf2 38.♖e5 ♕xe5 39.♕xe5+ ♔g4 White's position looks lost, but in fact it is a draw: 40.♕e4+ ♔g3 41.♕g6+ ♔h2 42.♕c2 ♔g2 43.♕g6+ ♔h1



44.♕b1+ when Black has nothing better than a draw.

37...f2 38.♖f1 ♔g4

Now it is clear that Black has taken over the game and the position is probably close to winning for him.

39.♕g7+ ♔f3 40.g4

White is trying to somehow find counter-chances, but there are none...

40...♕f4

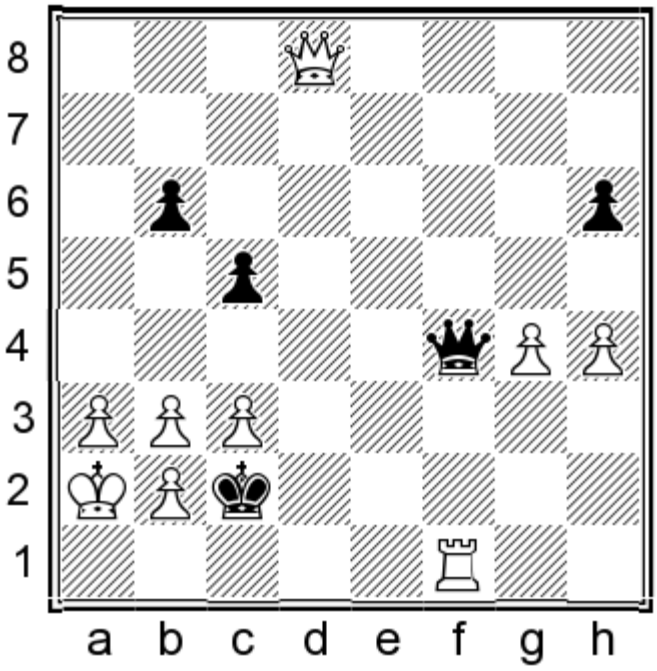
Black stays solid.

41.♕b7+ ♔e2

The black king has reached his final destination! :)

42.♖b1 ♖d3

This move is also winning, but Black missed the following pretty win: 42...f1=♕ 43.♕e7+ ♔d2 44.♕xd8+ ♔c2! What a position! 45.♖xf1



45...♕xf1 and White is hopeless against the mate on b1.

43.♕g2

White is hoping for his g-pawn to save him. 43.♕xb6 f1=♕ would just lead to a winning position for Black, as a rook up is too much.

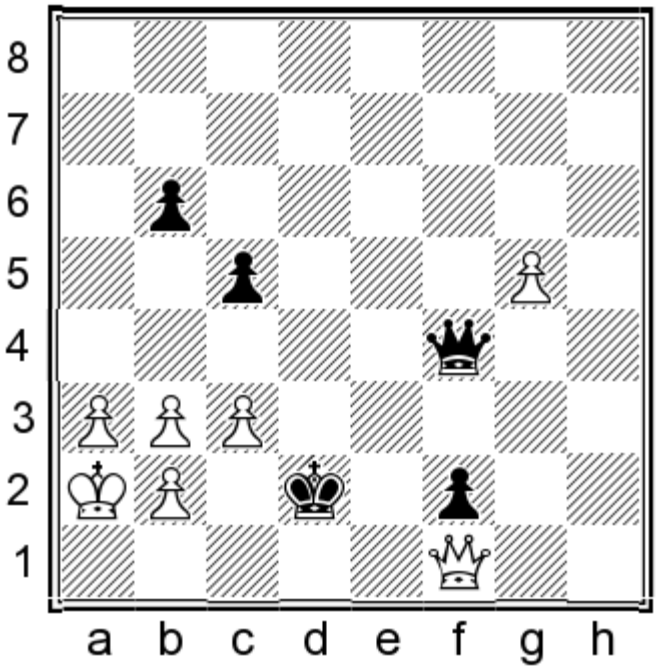
43...♖d1

Wang Hao chooses the simplest win.

44.♖xd1 ♔xd1 45.♕f1+ ♔d2

White can do nothing against ...♕g3-♕g1.

46.g5 hxg5 47.hxg5



47...♕g3 48.♕b5 ♕d3

This game was clearly a big pity for Caruana who had his opponent on the ropes, but the creative play of Wang Hao and a bit of luck brought him back into the game. What is sure is that we will very soon see Caruana over the 2800 ELO line.

0–1

GAME 21
V. Anand (2775)
M. Carlsen (2870)
WCh 2013 Chennai IND (9)
21.11.2013, [E25]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

At this point in the match Carlsen was leading with +2 wins and in the previous few games Anand rather made the impression of not wanting to lose any more games, rather than that of a fighter who wants to come back into the match. With only 4 games to go, Anand was forced to search for action on the board and that is exactly what he did this game. In a very sharp position, where any human player would choose White, Carlsen defended with amazing precision in the style of a computer, which clearly made Anand very nervous. In what was still an unclear position, Anand shocked everybody and simply blundered in 1 move.

1.d4

Anand finally switches to 1.d4, as in the previous games after 1.e4 Anand couldn't do anything against the Berlin.

1...♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4

I guess it was a little surprise for Anand that Carlsen chose to play the NimzoIndian, but of course not a big one.

4.f3!

A very fighting move! Anand finally shows that he is ready to head into a real battle.

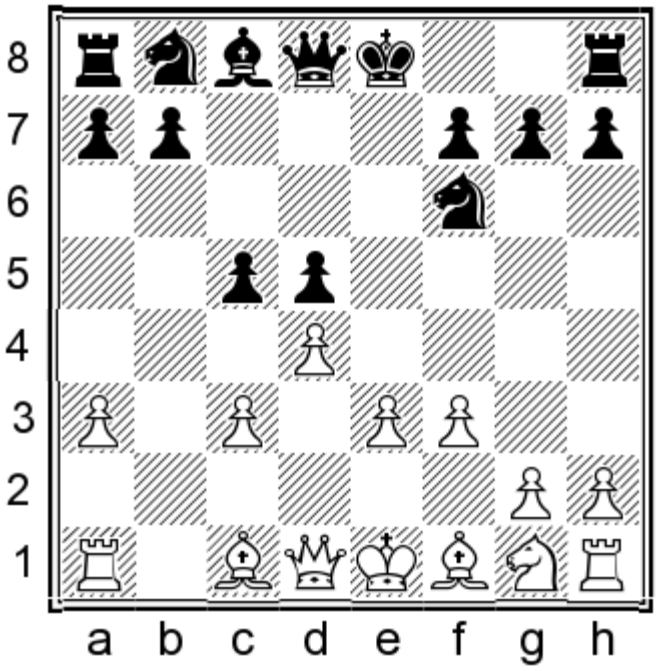
4...d5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 c5

One of the main lines. Anand has played a couple of games in this line before.

7.cxd5 exd5

7...♘xd5 8.dxc5 leads to the big main-line.

8.e3



8...c4!?

An interesting move, clearly prepared by Carlsen. Usually Black doesn't hurry with it and plays ...0-0 first. The idea of the immediate ...c4 is not to let White play ♗d3-♗c2. On the other hand, now the queenside is totally closed and it is much easier for White to start a direct attack on the kingside.

9.♘e2

A very logical move. White is preparing to play g4-♗g2-♘g3, which is quite a standard plan.

9...♘c6

The black knight is going to b3. Perhaps a move like 9...h5 would also make sense. Black stops g4 for a while and we know of similar ideas with ...h5 from the Najdorf.

10.g4 0-0

It is completely normal for Black to castle kingside. The position looks dangerous, but with his opening, there is already no choice.

11.♗g2 ♘a5 12.0-0 ♘b3 13.♖a2!

Another standard, but still nice, move. The white rook is going to a square like g2, or maybe even f2 across the 2nd rank.

13...b5

Black quickly starts his play on the queenside. An attempt to delay White's attack for a while would not bring anything: 13...♖e8 14.g5 ♘h5 15.e4 and White is faster.

14.♘g3 a5 15.g5

White starts his crush on the kingside!

15...♘e8

An important move as it is always better to keep the knight on e8 in such a structure.

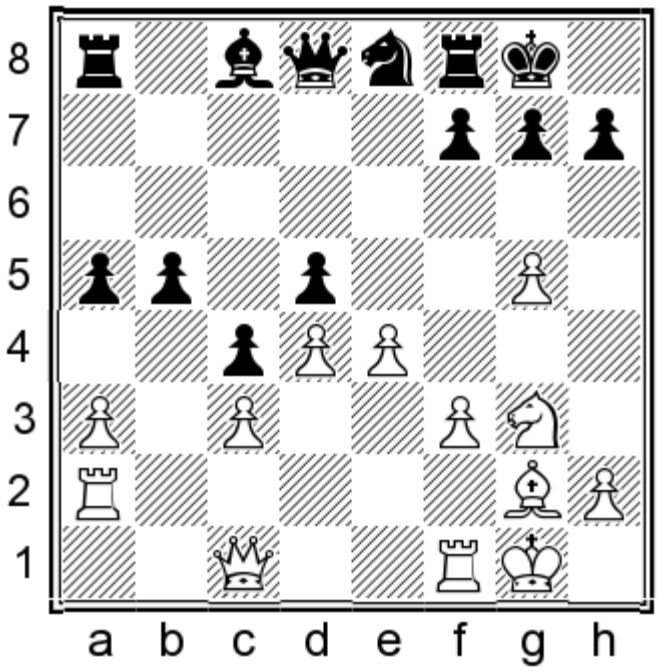
16.e4

White wants to play ♗f4 next.

16...♘xc1

Black needs to take on c1, as letting White play ♗f4 is not an option.

17.♕xc1

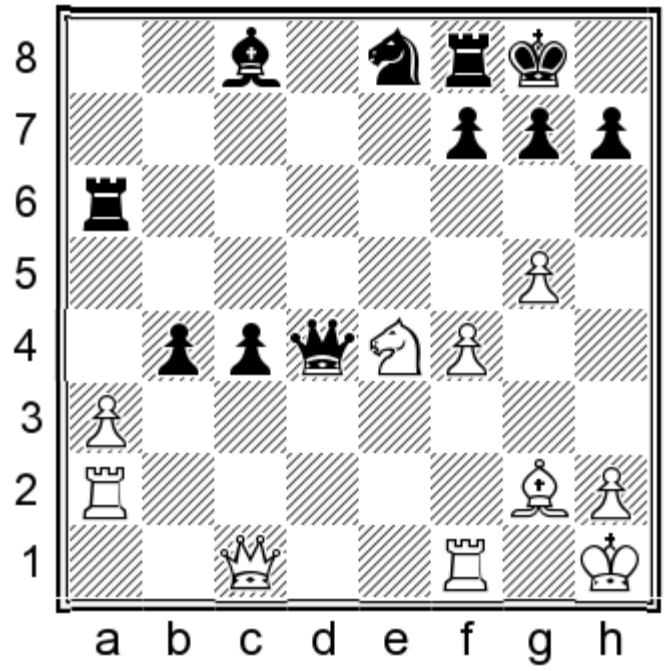


17...♖a6!

A nice move. Black is at the same time defending against the white attack and preparing the ...b4 push.

18.e5

A logical move but maybe not the best one. I think Anand could have been trickier here by starting with 18.f4!? ♘c7 (It seems like the position after *18...dxe4 19.♘xe4 b4 20.cxb4 ♕xd4+ 21.♔h1 axb4*



22.♖d2 is better for White.) 19.f5 when White is sort of trying to win a tempo.

18...♘c7!

A very difficult move to play for a human, but computers are very happy with Carlsen's decision. Black doesn't care about White's attack — which looks very dangerous! — and just plays for the ...b4 push. The funny thing is that Black's only survival idea will soon be to play ...♘e8 again, but whether Magnus had calculated everything until the end or just trusted his feeling, we will never know. In any case, amazing play!

19.f4

What could be more logical for White than to try and bring his pawn to f6!

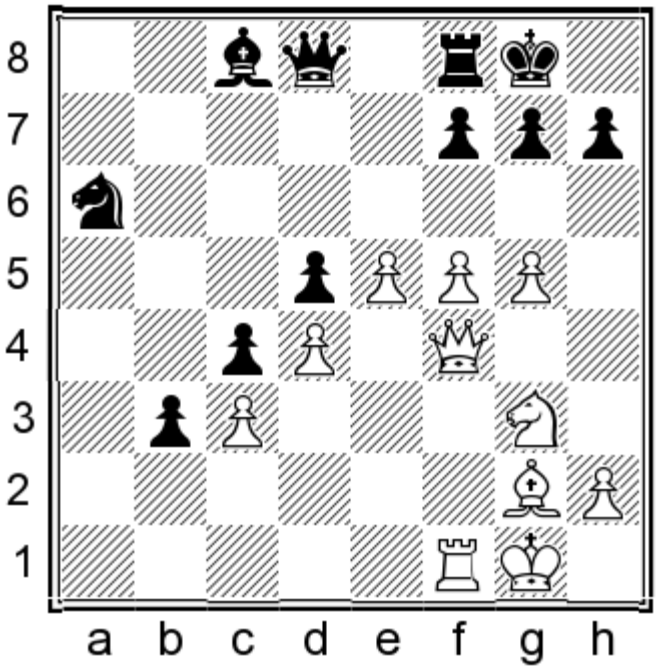
19...b4 20.axb4 axb4 21.♖xa6 ♘xa6

White forces the black knight to go even further away from his king.

22.f5 b3

From a human point of view, Black's position just looks lost. White's attack must just be crushing and the b3-pawn is very strong, but only in the endgame. After this move Anand thought for over 40 minutes!

23.♕f4



Another attacking idea could maybe have been to play 23.♘h5 ♘c7 24.♕e3 with a lot of different threats. The position is very complicated.

23...♘c7!

The black knight heads back to e8 to defend the g7-square. Really amazingly cool play by Carlsen. If we didn't know that a human was playing as Black, we might think that Anand is trying to mate an engine!

24.f6

I think Anand panicked a bit too early, or maybe miscalculated the line in the game. 24.♘h5 and the position is still very unclear here.

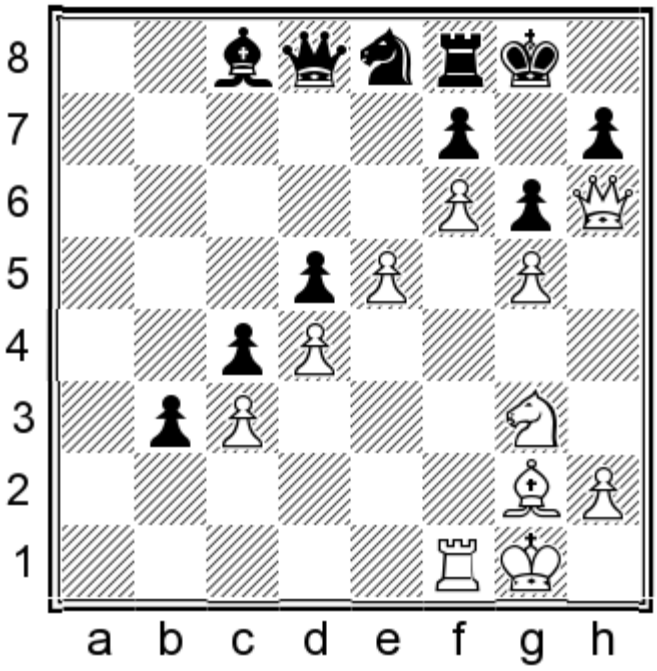
24...g6

Now the structure is fixed and White must got for the mate at all costs.

25.♕h4 ♘e8

To put the knight on e6 is of course bad because of ♗h3.

26.♕h6



26...b2!

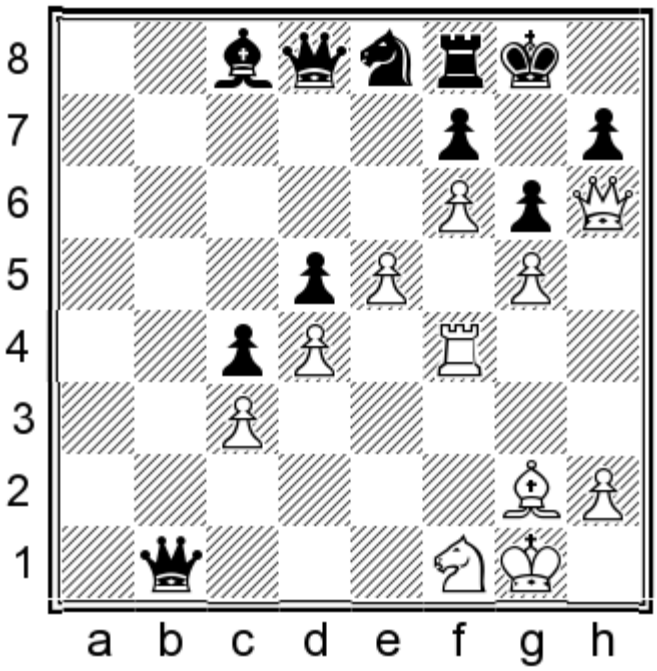
A very funny position. All the black pieces are on the 8th rank and the rook on f8 is just dead, but it seems like Black is not risking a loss in this game! The idea of playing ...♕a5 or ...♕b6 next is just too strong.

27.♖f4

Probably the best move.

27...b1=♕+ 28.♘f1??

What a shocking blunder...



28.♗f1 is the only move to continue the game. 28...♕d1 Black needs to give back his extra queen to prevent White from mating on the h-file. 29.♖h4 ♕h5 30.♘xh5 gxh5 31.♖xh5 ♗f5 It looks like Black is winning because of ...♗g6 on the next move, but 32.g6!! is very strong! 32...♗xg6 33.♖g5 with the idea of playing h4-h5 next. Maybe Black's best option is to play 33...♘xf6 and the game would probably end in a draw.

28...♕e1

Black just stops White from playing ♖h4 next and is a full rook up. What a game! Anand was clearly very disappointed that he was not able to mate Carlsen and this might be the only explanation behind his blunder on move 28. Now Carlsen is leading with +3 and there are only 3 games left, which basically makes him the new World Champion. Congratulations!

0–1

GAME 22
R. Wojtaszek (2711)
I. Popov (2640)
Zürich Open
30.12.2013, [D11]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

Radoszlaw Wojtaszek convincingly won the Zürich Open with 6 points out of 7 games. We will have a look at his nice victory from the last round.

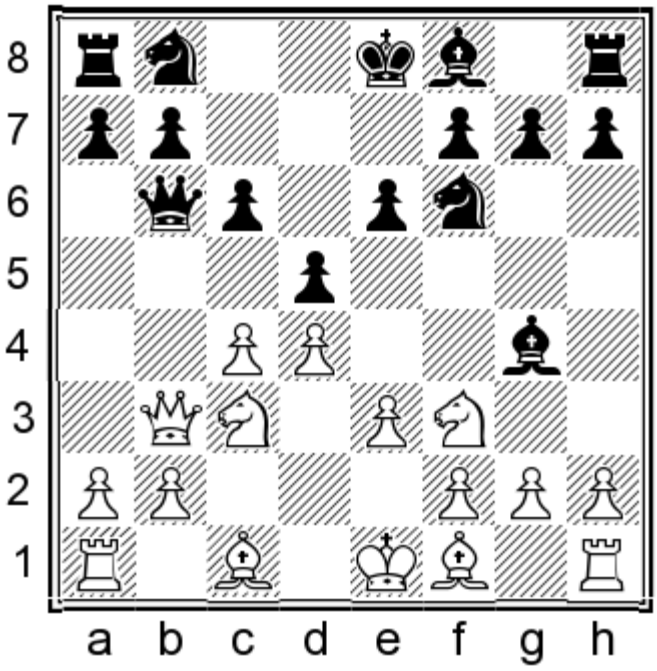
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6

The very solid Slav Defence is on the board.

4.e3 ♗g4

White has several setups here, but Wojtaszek goes for one of the main ones.

5.♕b3 ♕b6 6.♘c3 e6



7.♘h4

White aims to get the bishop pair by catching the g4-bishop with h3-g4. Black has no good way to prevent this plan, but the position remains closed and the two bishops will not hold such great importance for the time being.

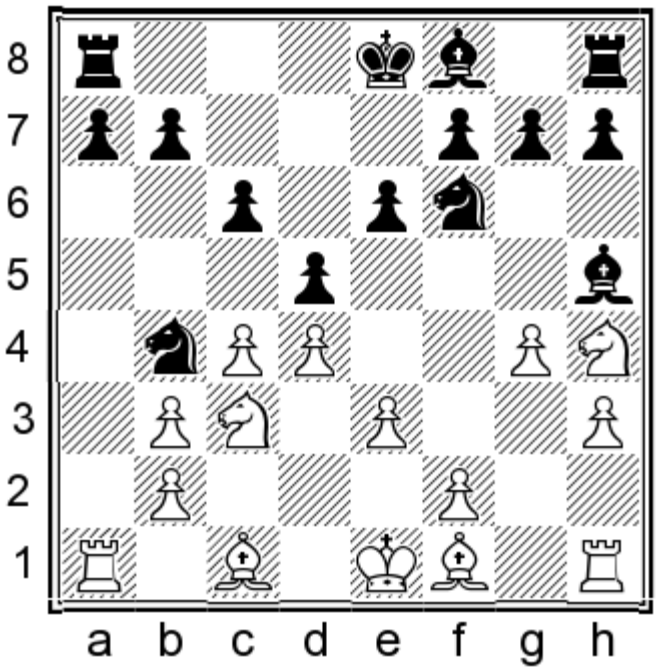
7...♗h5 8.h3 ♕xb3

The trade of the queens is always a big question in the Slav. Black should usually not be afraid of ♕xb6 because it improves his pawn structure, while ...♕xb3 is always double-edged as one has to know if the doubled pawns, or the opening of the a-file, has greater value. In the 5th round of the same tournament Wojtaszek scored another nice victory in this line. His opponent then played 8...♘bd7 9.g4 ♗g6 10.♘xg6 hxg6 11.♗g2 g5 12.♗d2 Wojtaszek-Kovalenko, Zürich 2013.

9.axb3 ♘a6

The knight is going to occupy an excellent position on b4. White cannot win with cxd5 and ♗xa6 because of the intermediate move ...♘b4 and Black is threatening ...♘c2 check.

10.g4 ♘b4



11.♔e2!

Without the queens on the board White should not worry about having the king in the middle of the board in such a closed position.

11...g5?!

Popov played this move without thinking, clearly showing that he was still in his preparation. The machine gives a very nice evaluation for Black, but if we continue analyzing we come to the conclusion that White's chances are preferable.

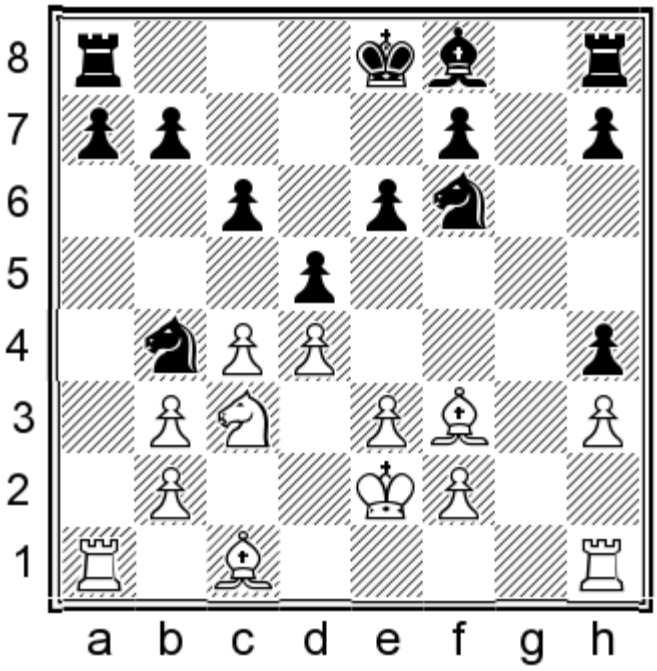
12.gxh5!

If the knight retreats the bishop survives. However White loses a pawn now...

12...gxh4

Black wins the h5-pawn but the engine wrongly evaluates its importance, as the doubled h-pawns can hardly be called a material advantage. On the other hand the two bishops slowly start to come to life.

13.♗g2 ♘xh5 14.♗f3 ♘f6



15.♗d2

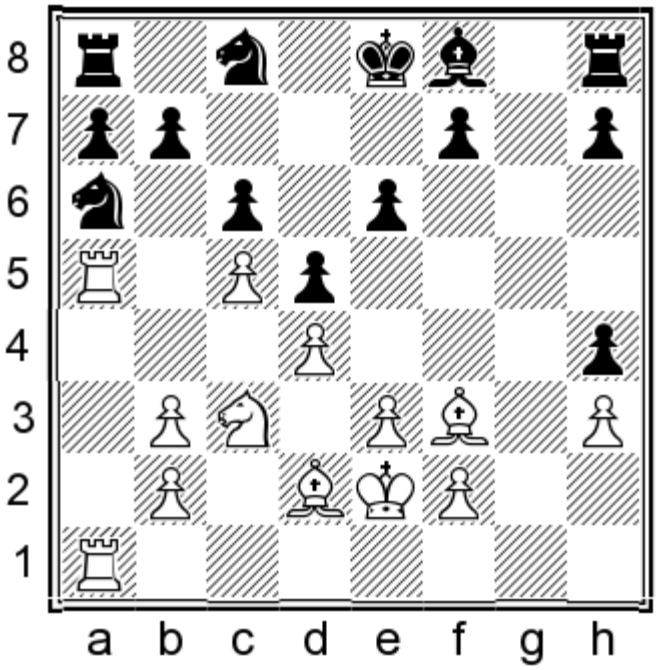
White does not need to hurry: he simply finishes his development and organizes his play on the queenside. He is going to double his rooks on the a-file and it soon becomes clear that the nice b4-knight might be completely misplaced...

15...♘d7 16.♖a5 ♘b6

Black provokes the movement of the c4-pawn. In general it is a good idea, but it costs too much time and also the b4-knight loses its support. Black should definitely have played 16...b6 followed by a5! stabilizing the b4-knight.

17.c5 ♘c8 18.♖ha1 ♘a6

Black wishes to lock the queenside with ...♘c7 and ...a6, but White finds a great idea to break down this defence!



Other moves, for instance 18...♗e7, would have been met by 19.♖5a4 ♘a6 20.b4 ♘c7 21.e4 and ♗f4 next, with more than enough compensation for the doubled h-pawns.

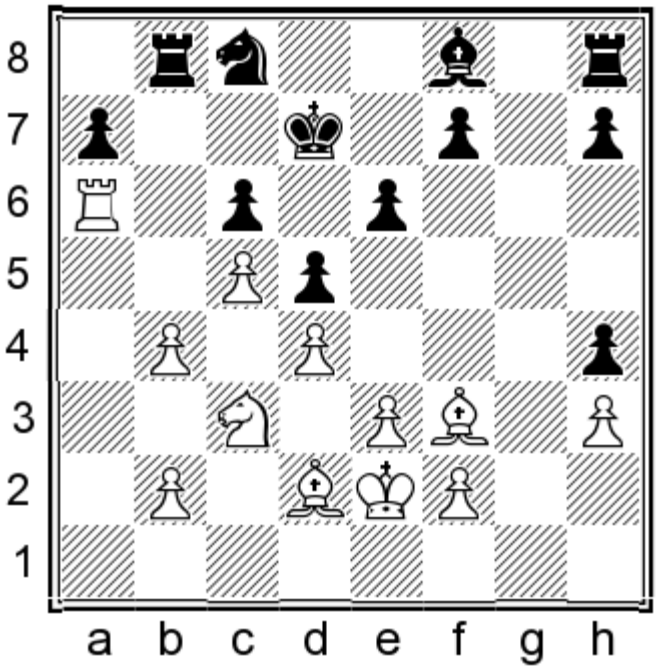
19.♖xa6!

A very deep exchange sacrifice. It soon becomes clear that White can create very strong pressure against the black pawns.

19...bxa6 20.♖xa6 ♔d7 21.b4!

White would like to break through with b5, after which the passed c-pawn becomes very strong. Black's pieces are passively placed and he doesn't have enough time to consolidate...

21...♖b8



Over the next three moves White sacrifices some more pawns in order to open the center in front of the black king. The rook and the three minor pieces are going to be able to create decisive threats.

22.b5!

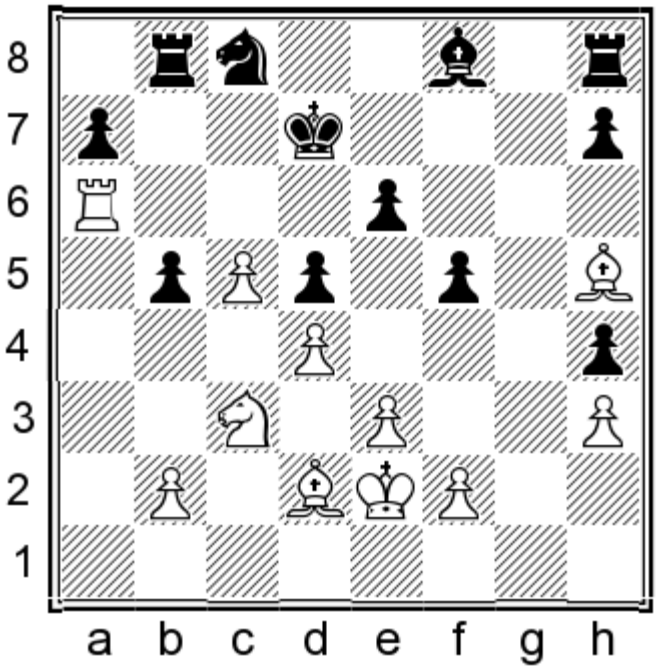
White does not count the material, he focuses solely on the attack.

22...cxb5 23.♗h5!?

The direct 23.e4 was also quite promising if White managed to foresee the following line: 23...b4 24.♘xd5!! exd5 25.♗f4 ♖a8 26.exd5± An amazing position. Despite the extra rook, Black has problems holding back the central pawns supported by the two bishops. d6 is coming next.

23...♔e7

If Black tries to fight against the e4 break with 23...f5



24.e4!! anyway, would have been a beautiful move. 24...dxe4 (*24...fxe4 25.♗g4+–* The loss of the e6 pawn followed by ♘xd5 would have meant the end of the game.) 25.♗f4 ♖a8 26.♗f7+– and Black collapses.

24.e4!

Wojtaszek continues his correct strategy of opening the center.

24...b4

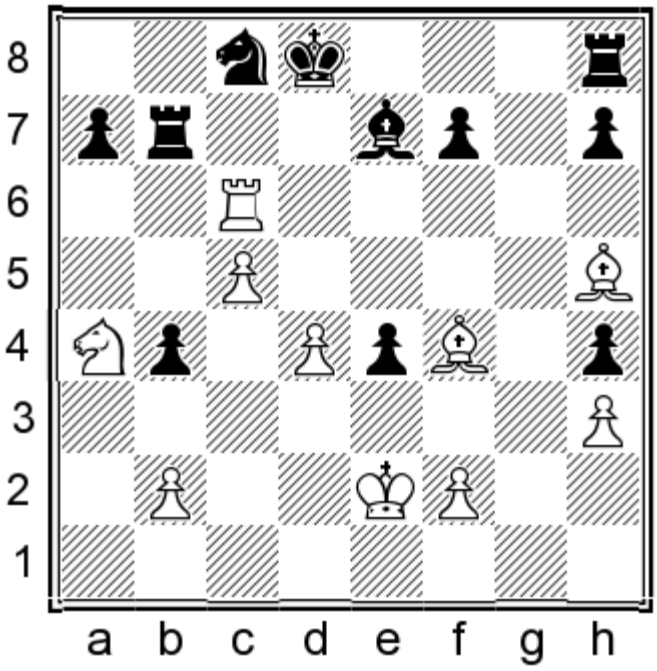
24...dxe4 is once again nicely refuted by 25.♗g5+ f6 26.♘d5+! exd5 27.♗xf6+ ♔d7 28.♗xh8+–

25.♗g5+! ♔e8

25...f6 again loses as in the 24...dxe4 line: 26.♘xd5+! exd5 27.♗xf6+ ♔d7 28.♗xh8+–

26.♘a4 ♗e7

26...dxe4 would have been met by 27.♖xe6+ ♗e7 28.♗f4 with similar stories as in the game. 28...♖b7 29.♖c6! ♔d8



30.♗g4! traps the knight! Black's pieces are completely without coordination!

27.♗f4 ♖b5

27...♖a8 is no better. White wins after 28.exd5 exd5 29.♗f3! and this time the rook is going to be trapped.

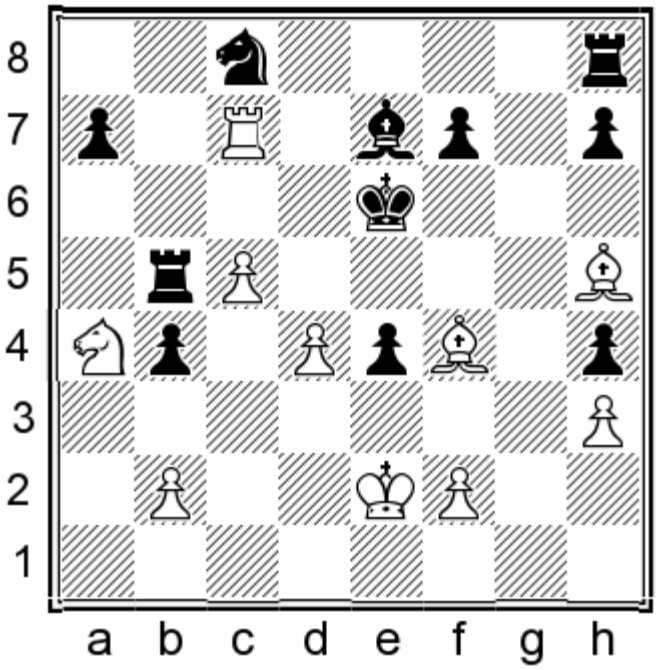
28.♖xe6

28.♖c6! immediately was even stronger. 28...♔d8 (*28...♔d7 29.♖c7+ ♔d8 30.♗xf7+–*) 29.♗xf7+– White takes on e6 next and the game is over.

28...dxe4 29.♖c6! ♔d7

29...♔d8 30.♗g4+– is over on the spot.

30.♖c7+ ♔e6

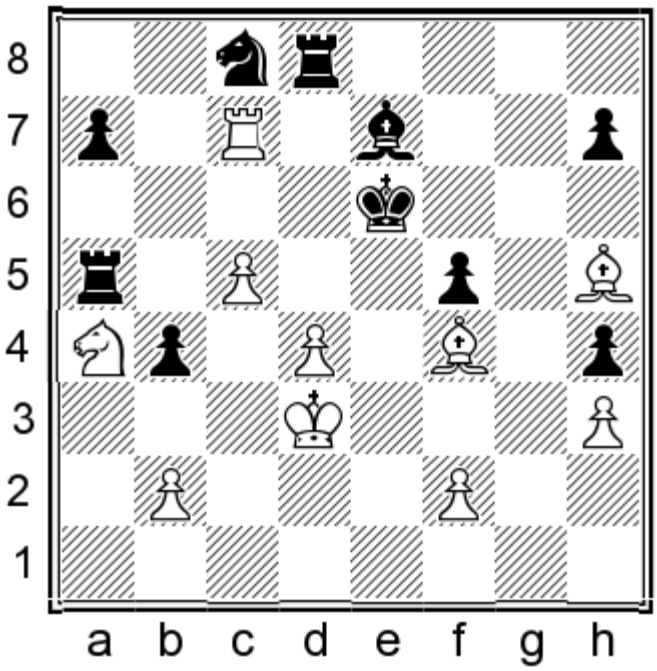


Black has managed to save his c8 knight, but now his king gets trapped in a mating-net. Wojtaszek brings a new piece to the attack.

31.♔e3! ♖d8

31...f5 loses to 32.♗e2 ♖a5 33.♗c4+ ♔f6 34.♗e5++–

32.♔xe4 f5+ 33.♔d3 ♖a5



34.b3

A spectacular final position. Black decided to put an end to his suffering in this extremely awkward position where he

cannot move any of his pieces. White, on the other hand, wants to improve his position with ♔c4 and d5. Black cannot try to create counterplay with ...♗f6 because ♗f7 mates immediately. A dream position for White and a nightmare for Black. A brilliant game!

1–0

GAME 23
R. Rapport (2691)
H. Nakamura (2789)
76th Tata Steel Masters
Wijk aan Zee NED (10)
25.01.2014, [A04]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Rapport has been playing a lot of strange openings and it usually went very wrong! This game is no exception. After the opening White quickly finds himself in trouble, but Nakamura decided to go into even deeper complications (for which there was no need) which gave White some attacking chances — and finally a missed opportunity by Rapport ended the game on the spot.

1.♘f3 c5 2.b3

Well, what to say to such about move... It can't be the right way to fight for any opening advantage.

2...d6

It seems very logical to me to plave ...d6-e5 against White's bishop on b2.

3.e3

White prepares the d4 move.

3...e5 4.♗b5+!

A strong check. 4.d4 wouldn't lead to anything for White as after 4...e4 5.♘fd2 d5 the position is at least equal.

4...♘c6

Nakamura is aiming for complications. 4...♗d7 was a simpler move. 5.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 6.0-0 ♘gf6 with an almost equal position.

5.♘c3

White is still preparing the d4-push, which was not possible immediately because of ...♕a5.

5...♘f6 6.d4

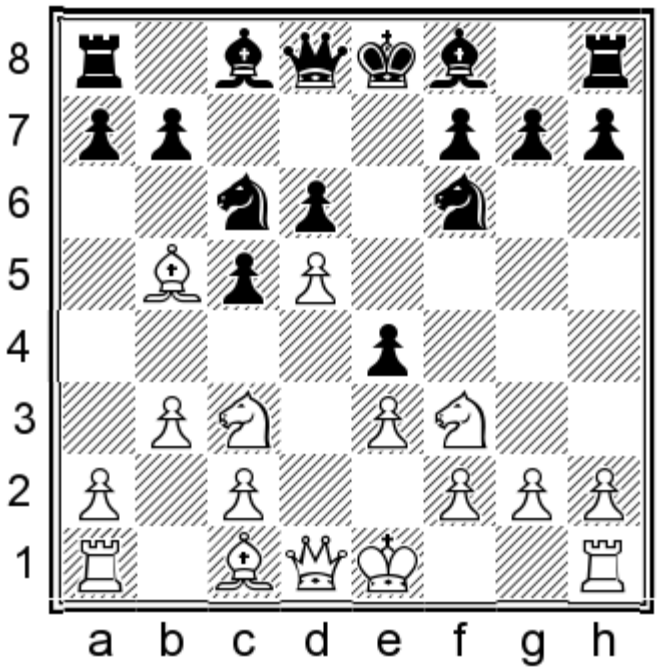
We already face a very strange position on move 6! It is clear that White's pawn would be better placed on b2 than on b3, but the position is very dynamic.

6...e4

A correct and typical move.

7.d5

White has nothing else left, it is not an option to allow Black to play ...d5.



7...a6!

This little move makes it all work for Black! Of course not 7...exf3?? 8.dxc6 and White is winning.

8.♗f1

The white bishop needs to return to his starting position. 8.dxc6? would lead to a very bad position as after 8...axb5 9.♘d2 bxc6 Black has the bishop pair and a strong center.

8...♘e7 9.♘d2 ♗f5

Now it is all about whether Black is in time to keep the pawn on e4 alive. In case he manages to, Black just has much more space — which means a clearly better position.

10.♗b2

The b3 move finally has some sense now. The bishop on b2 is somehow in the game.

10...b5!

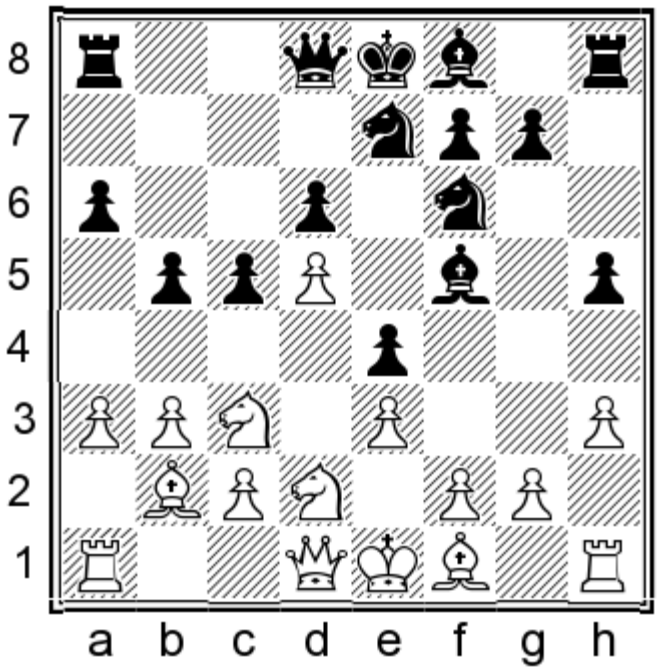
A good move. Black continues playing on “squeeze” mode. 10...♘exd5 didn’t make much sense because of the following great tactical trick: 11.♘dxe4! ♘xc3 12.♘xc3 d5 13.♗d3 and White has almost managed to equalize.

11.h3 h5

Not letting White play g4.

12.a3

Black wanted to play ...b4 and win the d5-pawn.



12...♘c8?

This logical move could have turned out to be a serious mistake. It was simpler for Black to play 12...h4 followed by ...♖h6 and ...♖g6, with pressure on g2. I think Black is clearly better here.

13.a4?

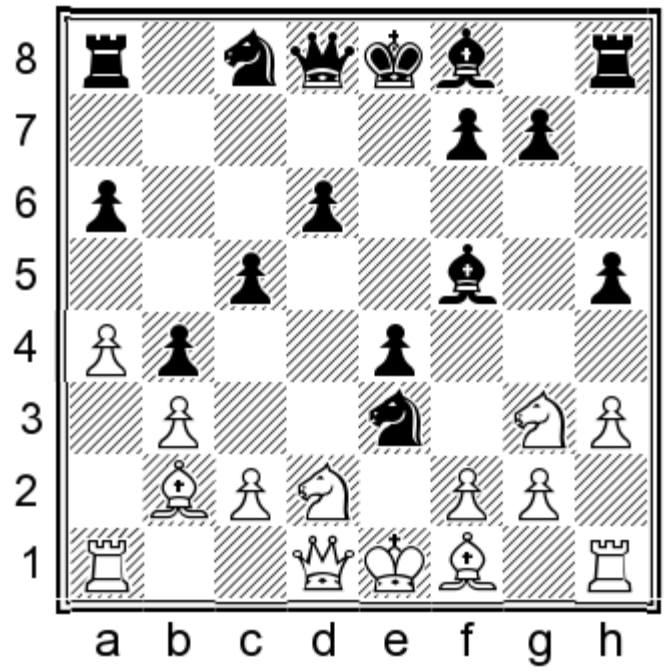
White returns the favor... 13.f3! While the black knight is in a passive position on c8, it was time for White to take resolute action. 13...exf3 What else?! 14.♕xf3 and suddenly all the white pieces look great. The next white move is 0-0-0 followed by e4-e5. Right out of nothing, Black's position is looking seriously bad!

13...b4 14.♘e2 ♘xd5!?

After this move we enter crazy complications. 14...♗e7 was much more solid and I think Black is better here. After the careless 14...h4? 15.g4! is a nice tactical move.

15.♘g3 ♘xe3

Black said "A" so he needs to say "B"...



After 15...♗g6 16.♘dxe4 White is better.

16.♕e2!

I have a feeling that Nakamura underestimated this move. 16.fxe3 wouldn't lead to anything good for White as after 16...♕h4 17.♔f2 d5 Black already has 2 pawns and a strong attack. 18.♘f3 is an attempt to complicate the game. (*18.♗e2 ♗d6 19.♘df1 ♘e7 20.♕e1 ♖h6* and White just cannot move!) 18...exf3 19.♕xd5 ♗d6 Black should be winning here.

16...♘xc2+ 17.♔d1 ♗g6!

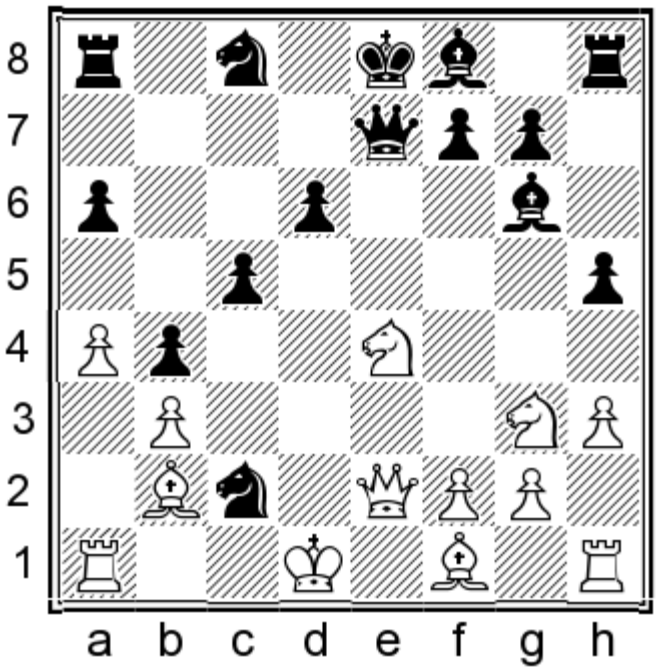
A strong move! After 17...♘xa1 18.♘xf5 d5 19.♘xg7+ ♗xg7 20.♗xg7 ♖h7 21.♗xa1 we have reached a position which is really difficult to evaluate.

18.♘dxe4!

Rapport correctly takes his chances. After 18.♔xc2 d5 Black's initiative should be crushing.

18...♕e7?!

In a very complex position Black doesn't choose the best move...



18...♘e7 was better and after 19.♕xc2 d5 20.♔e1! the position is highly unclear.

19.♕f3?

A bad move. White is aiming for a “beating” when it was time to think objectively. After the more concrete 19.♕xc2 d5 20.♗d3 dxe4 21.♗xe4 White is clearly better.

19...♘xa1

The black material advantage becomes huge.

20.♗c4

20.♗xa1 also leads to a bad position for White. 20...d5 21.♘f6+ gxf6 22.♗xf6 ♗e4

20...♘b6!

Now Black has ‘only moves’, but these only moves lead to a winning position.

21.♘f6+

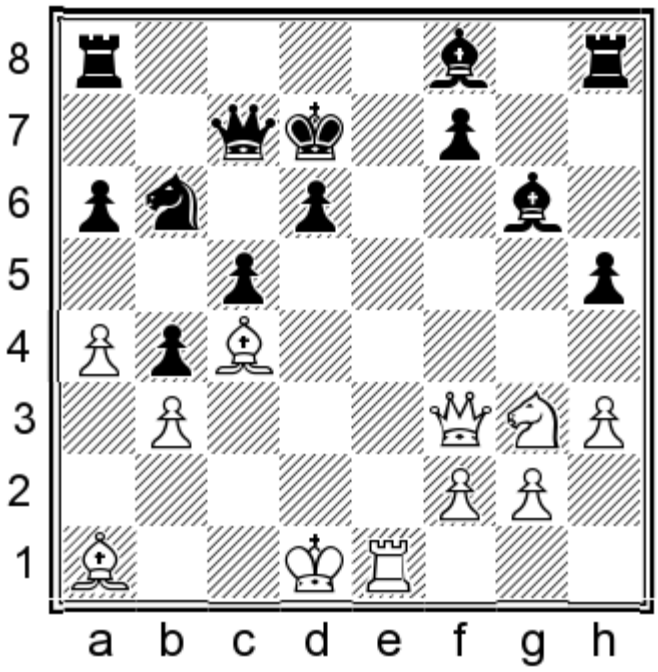
There was nothing else left, it is all-or-nothing now for White.

21...gxf6 22.♗xf6 ♕c7

Nakamura stays cool. The black king will feel quite safe on d7.

23.♖e1+ ♔d7 24.♗xa1

It is too late to win back the material. Black is still a full rook up.



24...♕c6!

A very good technical way to convert the advantage. By giving a full rook back Black exchanges the queens and enters a totally winning endgame.

25.♕xc6+ ♔xc6 26.♗xh8 h4

Chasing the knight.

27.♘f1 ♘xc4 28.bxc4 ♗d3

Black is a pawn up, he has a passed b-pawn, the bishop pair and many other plusses. The game is over.

29.♘d2 d5

Two connected passed pawns are better than one! :)

30.cxd5+ ♔xd5 31.♖e5+

I guess that White could have resigned the game now.

31...♔c6 32.♖h5 ♗g6

We just saw a crazy game with a very rare opening and, in an unclear position, Nakamura proved to be the better player.

0–1

GAME 24
F. Caruana (2782)
A. Naiditsch (2718)

76th Tata Steel Masters
Wijk aan Zee NED (10)
25.01.2014, [A05]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

At this moment I was having the worst tournament of my chess career. Why? This I asked myself as well... maybe I am just getting older!? :) Caruana was in second place and it was clear to everybody that anything other than a full point would be a disappointment for the World Nr5. Well, sometimes life is funny. Last year I played Caruana 3 times, I had 3 winning positions and out of those I scored 0.5 points, while now, being in such horrible shape, I somehow managed to win quite a smooth game. How to explain it? I have no idea!

1.♘f3

Caruana's main move is 1.e4 but I was expecting any opening given the tournament situation.

1...♘f6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2

So now I had to choose whether to play a Reti after 3...♗f5 or 3...♗g4 or 3...c6, or to play the same as against Karjakin and go into a Catalan after 3...e6 — but somehow I thought these openings were too boring so I decided to play something more 'quirky.

3...g6 4.c4

The quick 4.c4 is quite a tricky move because of the many move-orders which arise after it.

4...dxc4

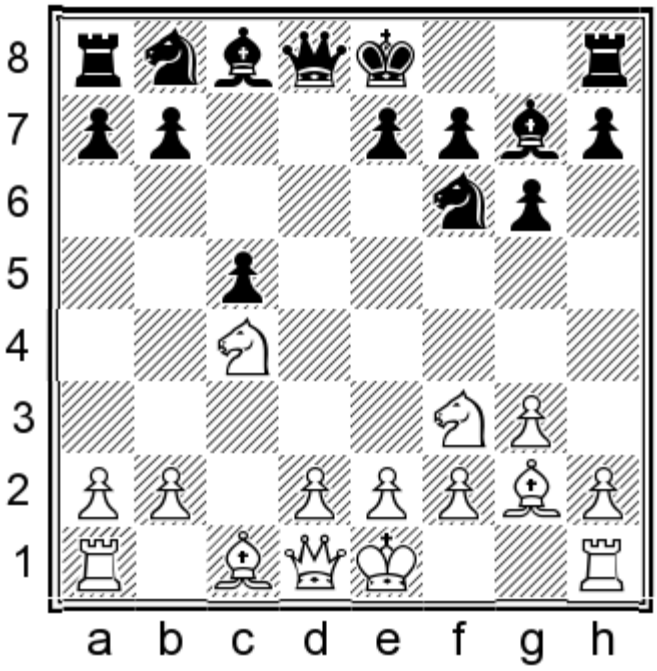
A more-or-less rare continuation. 4...♗g7 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.0-0 ♘b6 would lead to the main KID with g3.

5.♘a3

A very logical move. The white knight will take up a great position on c4.

5...♗g7 6.♘xc4 c5

I need to stop White from playing d4, after which Black would be a bit worse.



7.♘fe5?!

Caruana made this move after thinking for quite a long time. Personally I don't like it — it is just too early. I think White's position should be a bit better after the simple 0-0, d3, ♗d2, ♖c1.

7...0-0 8.d3 ♘d5 9.♕b3 e6 10.0-0 ♕c7

Now we can see why ♘fe5 was a bit too early. It is difficult for White to keep the knight on e5, and to go back would just mean a loss of tempo.

11.f4

White doesn't have a choice.

11...♘d7 12.♗d2!?

A little provocation.

12...b6

I just continue playing simple move. To develop the bishop on b7 can't be a bad idea. To go for the pawn would have been a bad decision: 12...♘xe5? 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.fxe5 ♕xe5 15.♖f2 followed by e4 and I would probably be crushed on the dark squares.

13.♘f3 ♗b7 14.e4

White needs to do something. I had an easy plan, to play ...♖ac8-♖fd8 next with a very comfortable position.

14...♘b4

14...♘e7 was also possible, but somehow I thought the position of the knight on b4 was a bit more active, and of course White cannot play ♗xb4.

15.♗c3

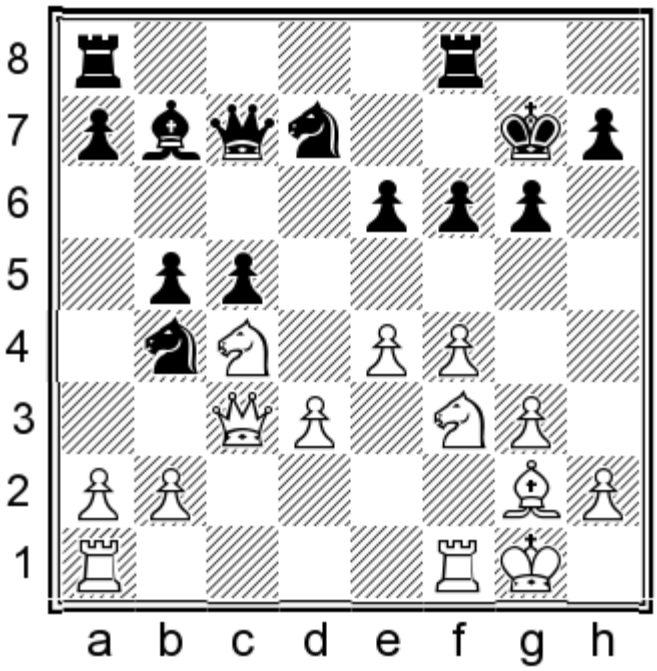
White needs to exchange the black squared bishops. If I was in time for ...♘c6-♘d4 my position might already be better. Of course, taking the pawn would have been a big mistake as after 15.♗xb4 cxb4 16.♕xb4 ♘c5 the black pieces are just superb!

15...b5

During the game I was not sure if this was the right decision. My c5-pawn becomes a bit weak now, but on the other hand my pieces are gaining in activity. 15...♖ad8 would have been a solid move when I think the position is quite complicated.

16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♕c3+ f6

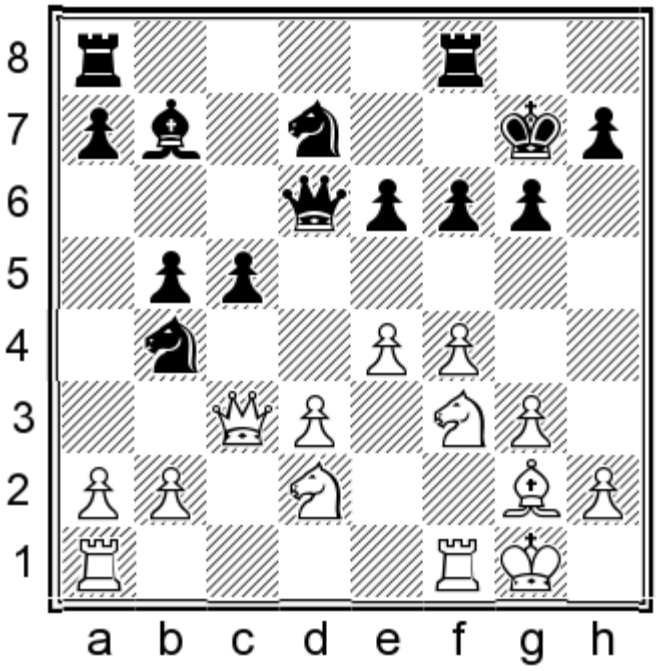
Black's position looks a little strange with pawns on g6-f6-e6 but it is very solid.



18.♘cd2

After 18.♘e3 ♖ad8 Black is fine as well.

18...♕d6



Perhaps 18...♕b6 would have been a better place for the queen, but it is hard to say.

19.a3!

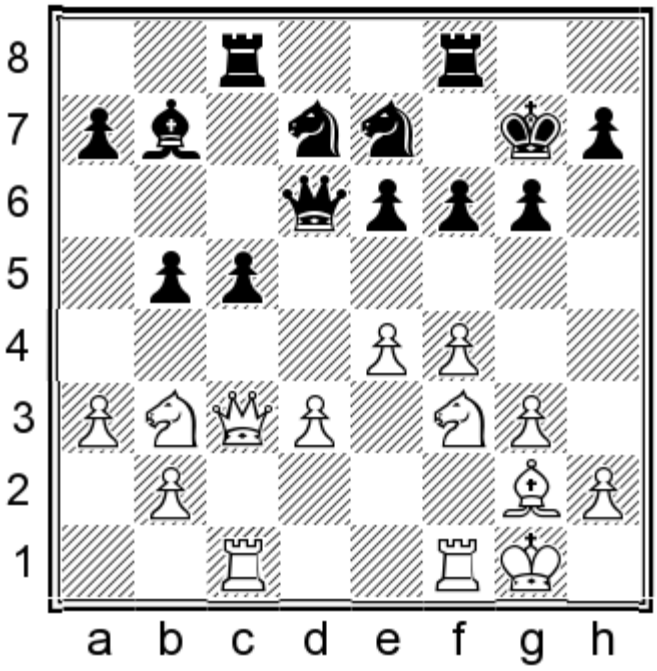
The only move to keep the game in an ‘unclear’ assessment. During the game I thought that after 19.d4 ♖ac8 my position should be at least equal.

19...♘c6

Once again it would have been a mistake to take the pawn, as after 19...♘xd3 20.e5! my whole position is falling apart. 20...b4 21.axb4 cxb4 22.exd6 bxc3 23.bxc3 with a clearly better endgame for White.

20.♘b3 ♖ac8 21.♖ac1 ♘e7

So far all the moves have been pretty logical, and the position is very complicated. It is a pity for me that I never have the ...e5 move because of ♗h3! but it is also difficult for White to create any concrete threats.



22.e5?

This looks like a serious mistake to me. Now my knight gains a great square on d5. It would have been better for White to play 22.♗h3, again with a very complicated position.

22...♕b6 23.exf6+ ♖xf6 24.♔h1

In many lines I wanted to play ...c4, so this move is almost forced.

24...♘d5

I now have a really great knight on d5!

25.♕d2 c4!

Caruana was slowly getting into time-trouble and I felt that ...c4 should be the right move. Anyhow, it was too tempting for me not to transport my knight from d7 to d3, even if I destroy my own pawn structure in the process.

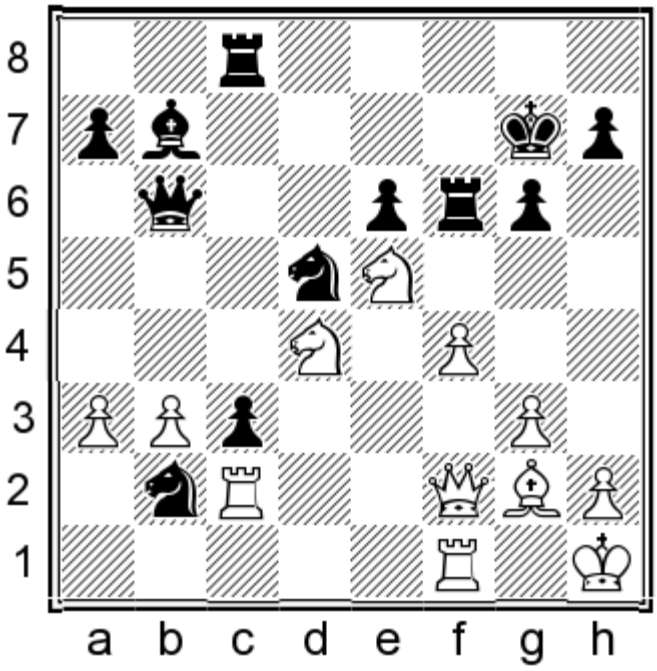
26.dxc4 bxc4 27.♘bd4 ♘c5 28.♖c2!

A strong defensive move. Now the rook will defend the b2-pawn and at the same time protect the bishop on g2.

28...♘d3 29.b3 ♘b2!

A very nice way to defend the c4 pawn. I calculated for a long time, hoping to play 29...♘5xf4 30.gxf4 ♘xf4 31.♖xc4 ♖xc4 32.bxc4 e5 but I really could not evaluate this position. It is hard to say if I have enough power to really mate the white king -the position is simply unclear.

30.♘e5 c3 31.♕f2



31...♖d8!

A good move. It is clear that White's position is already very dangerous. I have a strong c3-pawn and the white king could also get in trouble if I could somehow get rid of the g2-bishop. My main enemy is the knight on d4, so it is time to get rid of him.

32.♖e1?

After this move the game is already over. My opponent had to find the amazing 32.♕g1!! — a move which is very hard to play during a practical game. 32...♘xf4 33.gxf4 ♖xd4 34.♖xc3 It seems like Black has no direct win and the position remains extremely complicated.

32...♘xf4

Now the game is over.

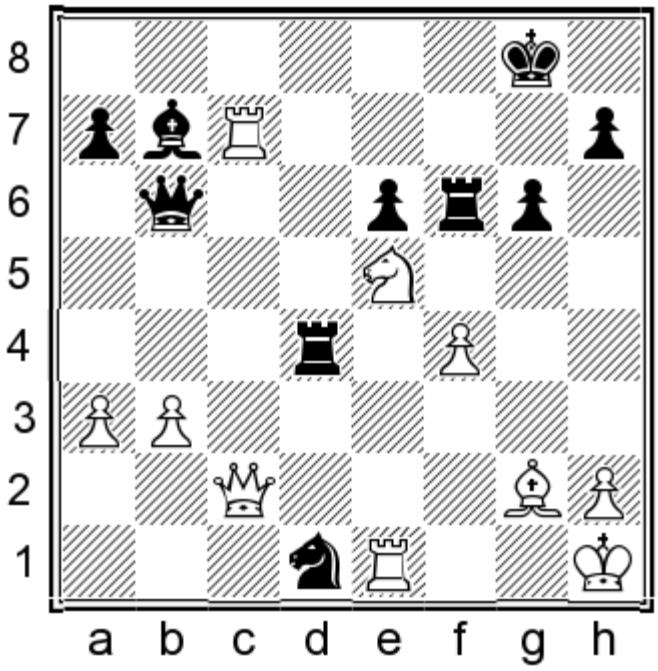
33.gxf4 ♖xd4 34.♖xc3 ♘d1!

This is why the white queen should have been on g1.

35.♖c7+ ♔g8

A lot of white pieces are hanging now.

36.♕c2



36...♖dxf4!

The simplest way of ending the game.

37.♖xb7

37.♖xd1 ♖f1+ 38.♖xf1 ♖xf1#

37...♘f2+ 38.♔g1 ♘h3+ 39.♔h1 ♖f1+

I was very happy to win such a game, although it only improved my overall mood a little bit. I don't even want to imagine how Caruana felt after such a disaster in such an important 12th round.

0–1

GAME 25
A. Shimanov (2649)
B. Jobava (2716)
15th ch-EUR Indiv 2014
Yerevan ARM (4.5)
06.03.2014, [D16]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We will now witness one of the craziest games I have ever seen. Jobava is famous for being a very creative player, and Shimanov is also very good at tactics. The crazy play started on move 12 and went on for over 20 moves, which is a very rare fact because most games are decided relatively quickly in the tactical phase. Enjoy this parade of tactics and creativity!!!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5

This time Jobava decides on something very solid, which we don't see too often in his games. His usual repertoire is more connected to Benoni or KID structures.

3.c4 c6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4

So we are in one of the main lines of the Slav.

5...♗g4

Not the main move, but not a rare one either.

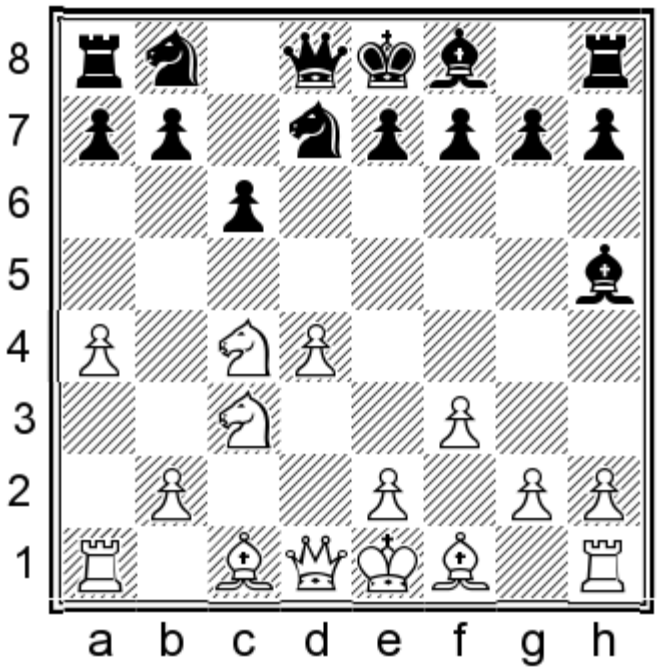
6.♘e5 ♗h5 7.f3

White's idea is simple: play the bishop h5 out of the game by putting up a pawn-wall with f3-e4. Lately White has more often tried 7.g3 e6 8.♗g2 ♗b4 9.0-0 with perhaps a small advantage for White, and a much calmer position than in the game.

7...♘fd7

This is still theory and in 2009 Shimanov played this position with the white pieces.

8.♘xc4



8...e5

Now we can see the idea behind 7...♘fd7: to achieve quick play in the center. In case White would now be in time to play e4 and then ♗e2 & 0-0, Black's position would already be quite bad because of the horrible bishop on h5.

9.e4

Of course not 9.dxe5?? ♕h4+ and the knight on c4 is lost. 10.g3 ♕xc4

9...♕h4+

An important check to weaken the white pawn structure.

10.g3 ♕f6

And now the d4 and f3 pawns are under attack. As we can see, the position is already becoming ng quite forced.

11.dxe5 ♕xf3!?

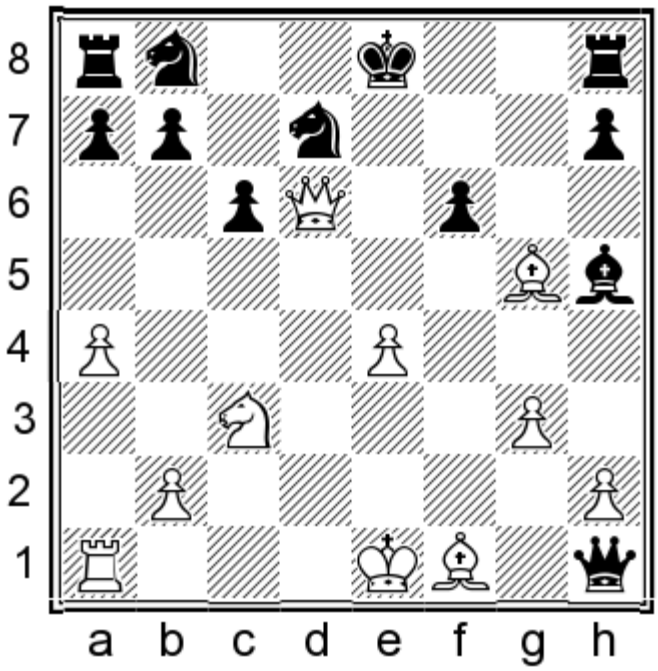
This move is some sort of novelty on the highest level. In Shimanov's previous game 11...♘xe5 was played. After 12.♘xe5 ♕xe5 13.g4 ♗g6 14.f4 the black bishop was trapped. 14...♕f6 15.f5 ♕h4+ 16.♔d2 Black has some compensation, but White should have a clear advantage here.

12.♘d6+

The only move, but a very strong one.

12...♔e7!

And this is probably a novelty prepared by Jobava. What a shocking idea to put the king in front of all the pieces, but things are much more complicated than they seem. After 12...♗xd6 Black would lose on the spot to 13.♕xd6 ♕xh1 and even a full rook up doesn't help Black to survive here. The position is lost by force. 14.♗g5 f6 15.exf6 gxf6



16.♗xf6 ♘xf6 17.♕e6+ ♔f8 18.♕xf6+ ♔g8 19.♕d8+ ♔g7 20.♕g5+ ♗g6 21.♕e5+ and White is totally winning.

13.♕b3!?

A very tricky move by Shimanov. The more solid continuation 13.♗g5+ f6 14.exf6+ gxf6 15.♗f4 ♕xd1+ 16.♘xd1 ♘e5 would at most lead to a slightly better endgame for White.

13...♘xe5

Black would be doing badly after 13...♘c5 14.♕c4 ♕xh1 15.♕xc5 and White's attack is clearly crushing. But maybe it was time to take the rook: 13...♕xh1!? 14.♕xb7 And here comes a very strange, but strong, computer move: 14...♔e6! with very unclear play. Of course White has at least a draw by playing 15.♕b3 ♔e7 16.♕b7.

14.♕xb7+ ♔f6!

No fear! 14...♔xd6 would also lead to a complicated, but worse, position. 15.♖g1 threatening to play ♗e2 next. 15...♔e6 There are many other moves for Black, but this seems to be the strongest. 16.♗e2 ♘d3+ 17.♔d2 ♕f2 18.♖f1 ♕d4 19.♕b3+ ♔e7 20.♗xd3 and only White can be better here.

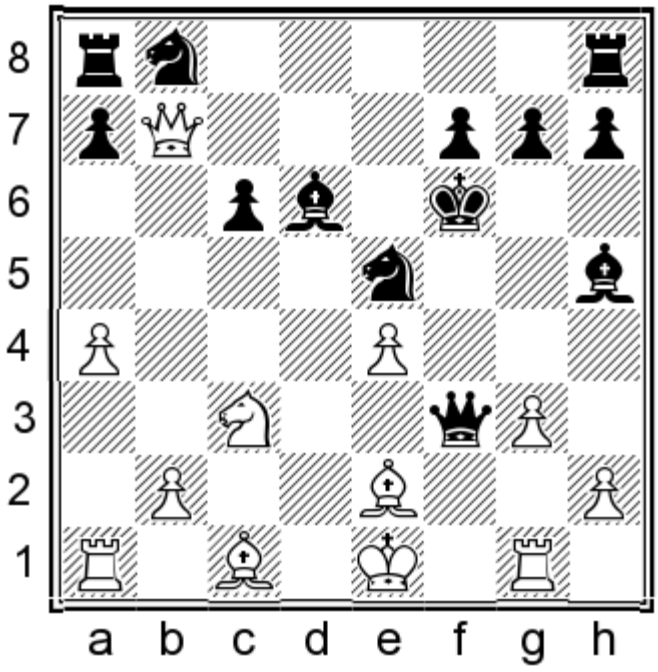
15.♖g1!

The best and only move. Black already wanted to play ♕xh1.

15...♗xd6

Black is playing the best moves. The queen on f3 cannot be saved anymore, so it is time to get as much compensation for her as possible.

16.♗e2



16...♘bd7!

Strong play! Black brings all his pieces into the attack.

17.♗xf3 ♘c5

Jobava continues playing for the initiative. Another way to continue was 17...♘xf3+ 18.♔f2 ♘fe5 when Black has 2 pieces for the queen and quite some attack. 19.♕b3 Objectively White should be better, but I think Black has quite some practical chances to be back in the game.

18.♘d5+

The only move for White!

18...cxd5

Black has to take the knight and allow the white queen to return to the game. In case of 18...♔g6 then 19.♘f4 and the game would be over.

19.♕xd5 ♘xf3+

Black has 3 pieces for the queen, which is already a lot, but the bishops on d6 and h5 are hanging and the king on f6 is also badly placed. The position remains very unbalanced and probably favourable to White.

20.♔f1

20.♔f2? is a mistake, as after 20...♗e5! White cannot take on c5 because of ...♗d4 check.

20...♗e5

Once again Jobava plays the most practical move in the position, trying to get maximum compensation for the queen.

21.♕xc5

This move is also forced.

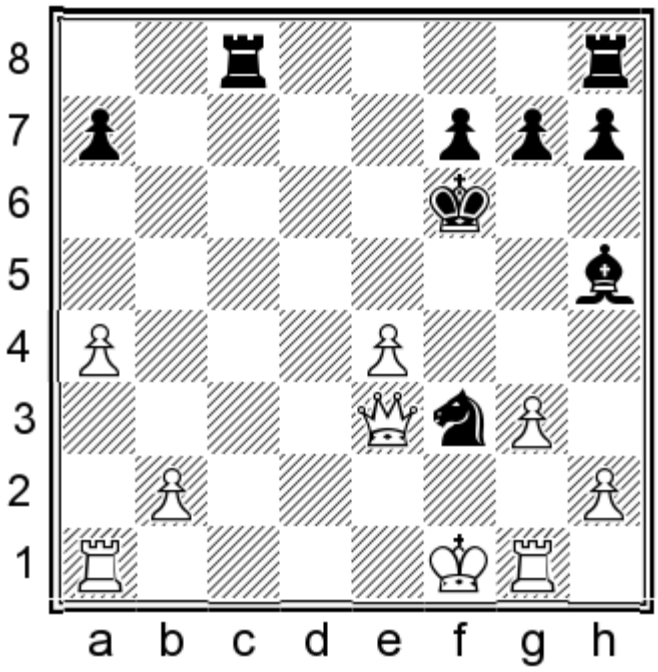
21...♖ac8 22.♕f2

A logical move, but now Black gains very strong play. 22.♕e3 was probably stronger and after 22...♖hd8 all the black pieces are in the attack, but it is just not enough. 23.g4! ♘xh2+ 24.♔e1 and White should win the game because of his huge material advantage.

22...♗d4

The game continues to be very tricky.

23.♗e3 ♗xe3 24.♕xe3



24...♘xh2+

White is always missing one move to be winning. As long as the white king is under attack, the game remains very unclear.

25.♔g2

25.♔e1 doesn't lead anywhere after 25...♘f3+

25...♖c2+ 26.♔h3

The white king has escaped to the h-file, but here White is also in a mating net — what a crazy position!

26...♗g4+

Jobava continues finding the best practical chances.

27.♔h4 h5

Finally a move without check, but the white king is caught. Black wants to play ♘f3 next with a mate.

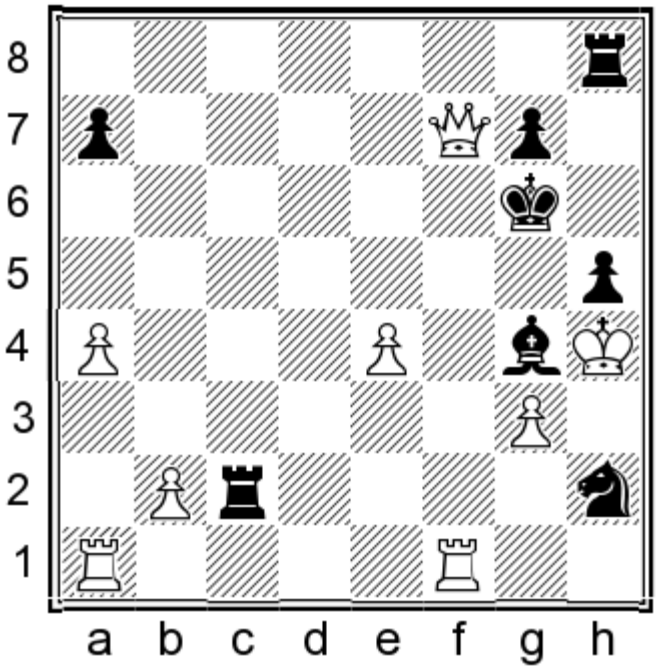
28.♕g5+

The only move. After 28.♖gf1+ ♔g6 29.♕g5+ ♔h7 only Black can be playing for a win.

28...♔e6 29.♕d5+ ♔e7

Not a mistake, but the black king is going in the wrong direction. 29...♔f6 would probably lead to a draw. 30.♖gf1+ (After *30.*♕*d6+ ♗e6* Black is already better.)

30...♔g6 31.♕xf7+ and here Jobava probably missed the very strong



31...♔h6! and White doesn’t have anything better than to force a draw after 32.♖f6+ gxf6 33.♕xf6+

30.♕b7+ ♔f8?

This move already gives White what is probably an advantage, but of course during a practical game and with not much time left on the clock it is hard to blame Jobava for such a logical reply. Black could still save the game after 30...♔f6 31.♖gf1+ ♔g6 32.♕xf7+ ♔h6 and we are back to the line above.

31.♔g5

The white king finally escapes its trap on h4.

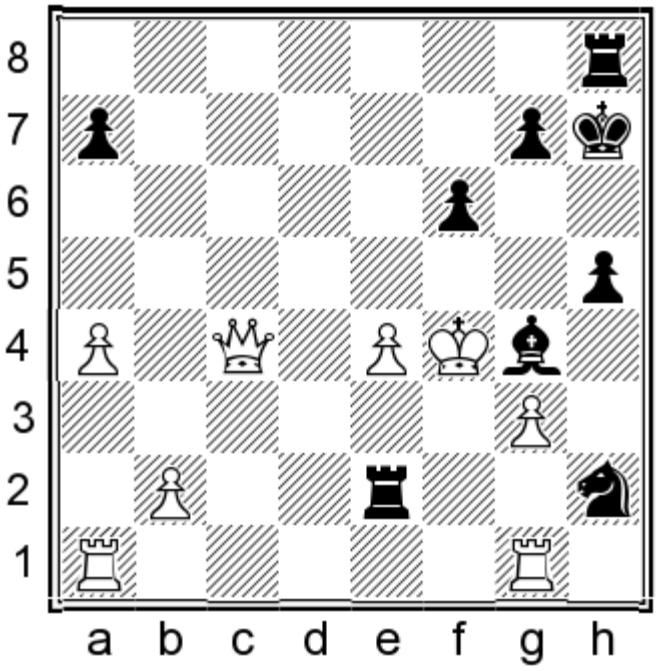
31...f6+ 32.♔f4 ♖e2!

Once again Jobava is trying to mate, this time by playing ...g5.

33.♕b4+

The only move. The position is still very forced.

33...♔g8 34.♕c4+ ♔h7



35.♕xe2!

This is the only way for White to go on.

35...♗xe2 36.♖g2

With a double attack on the knight h2 and bishop on e2. After amazing complications we have reached an endgame which should be minimally better for White.

36...g5+

Another logical move.

37.♔e3 ♘g4+

To keep the bishop doesn't make sense as the knight is now going to take up a very strong position on e5.

38.♔xe2 ♖b8

Another logical move.

39.♔d3!

A good move! White quickly brings the his king closer to the queenside pawns.

39...a5

And this move probably costs Black the game... 39...♖b4! would put White in quite some trouble. 40.♔c3 giving up the e4 pawn is probably the best option. 40...♖xe4 41.b4 White should of course be better, but the game is far from over as the black pawns and very strong knight on e5 would give Black counter chances.

40.♔c3 ♔g6 41.b3

The time-trouble phase is now over. White is an exchange up and should be winning, even if it is not that easy.

41...♖c8+ 42.♔b2

White continues to stabilize his position.

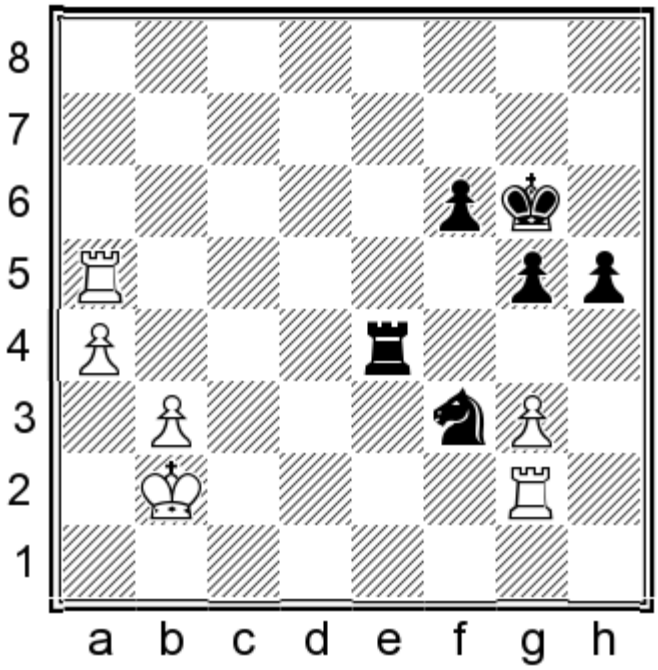
42...♖e8 43.♖e1

Everything is finally protected and next White wants to activate the rook from g2.

43...♘e5 44.♖d1!

Shimanov continues playing a perfect game. White gives up the e4-pawn but goes for the much more important a5 instead.

44...♘f3 45.♖d5 ♖xe4 46.♖xa5



46...h4?

And Jobava misses his final chance... 46...♖g4! with the idea of playing h4 next would have led to a much tougher fight. 47.♖c2 White needs to give up the g3 pawn. 47...♖xg3 48.♖d5! Cutting off the f3 knight. White's position should be winning now, but things are still quite tricky from a practical point of view.

47.gxh4 ♘xh4 48.♖c2

Now White is just must faster and the game finally comes to an end.

48...g4 49.♖a8 ♔f5 50.a5 g3 51.♖g8

Preventing the g-pawn from advancing further.

51...♖e5 52.b4 g2 53.a6

We just saw a really amazing game where both players played almost perfectly in a very, very complicated position. Just a few mistakes by Black gave White a chance for the full point. But what an impressive performance by Shimanov, who managed to play an almost perfect game in a crazy position!

1–0

GAME 26
V. Kramnik (2787)
S. Karjakin (2766)
FIDE Candidates 2014
Khanty-Mansiysk RUS (2.4)
14.03.2014, [D20]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Could it be the last chance for Kramnik to take on the World Championship title?! For over 20 years Vladimir has been one of the best players in the world. He has won everything possible, and we all remember that he was the only person to defeat Kasparov in a WCC Match! Before the Candidates, Kramnik even rejected playing in the Zurich super-tournament, in order to be in perfect shape. And he is, as with another novelty Kramnik sets big problems for Karjakin, who couldn't find a way to save the game

1.d4 d5

Karjakin said in his interview that he prepared for a month with 4 trainers and here he opens with the Queen's Gambit, an opening he has rarely played before.

2.c4 dxc4

And we now have the Queen's Gambit Accepted.

3.e4

Kramnik chooses the most aggressive line.

3...♘f6

Another main line is 3...e5 4.♘f3 exd4 5.♗xc4

4.e5 ♘d5 5.♗xc4

So far there is, of course, nothing new. From the structure we can see that White has a slight space advantage, but Black dominates on the white squares.

5...♘b6 6.♗d3

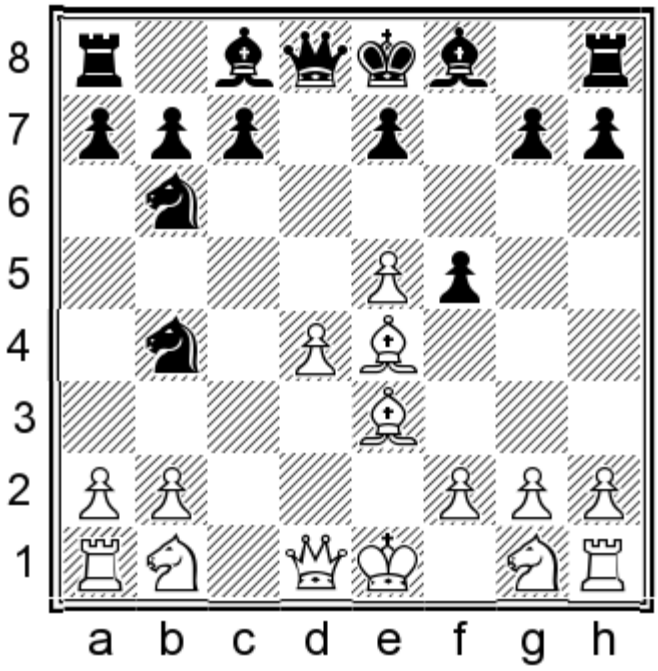
This is one of the most popular lines at the moment.

6...♘c6

Black aims for a blockade on the d5-square.

7.♗e3 ♘b4 8.♗e4 f5

This move is nothing new either. In 2012 Karjakin already played a blitz game against Ding Liren, who continued with the main move 9.exf6.



9.a3!?N

A very interesting — and probably strong — novelty. The main lines goes 9.exf6 exf6 10.♘c3 f5 11.♗b1 ♘4d5 with a complex position.

9...fxe4

Black accepts the challenge, but his position becomes extremely dangerous. Another very logical reply is 9...♘4d5 and now White has quite some choice of moves, but probably an idea could be to play 10.♗xd5. It looks a bit strange to give up such a nice bishop, but Black is very slow with his development. 10...♘xd5 11.♘e2 followed by ♘bc3. It is hard to say if White is really better here, but we can be sure that Kramnik's analyses are very deep, so I guess Karjakin would have had a tough time playing against a human+engine mutant! :)

10.axb4

What a strange position, one which is very tough to evaluate. Black's pawn structure is very bad, but on the other hand he has control over the light squares, and also the bishop pair... The position is very dynamic.

10...e6

A very logical move. After 10...♗f5 11.♘e2 e6 12.b5 followed by ♘bc3 and short castling, I think that White's position somehow looks nice.

11.♘c3

White doesn't even try to save the pawn and plays for the initiative, and we can be sure that this was nothing new to Kramnik...

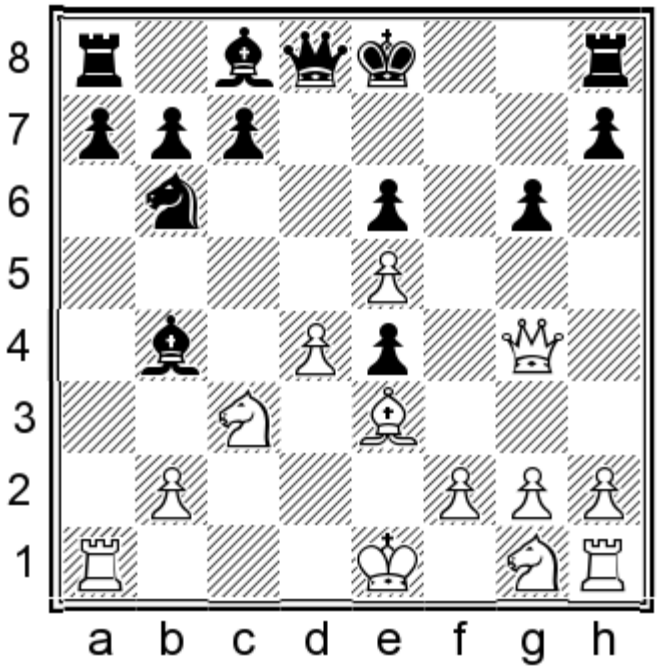
11...♗xb4 12.♕h5+!

A very strong and important move. Before attacking the e4 pawn, White tries to weaken Black's pawn structure as

much as possible on the dark squares. To play 12.♕g4 with a double attack on e4 and g7 12...0-0 13.♘ge2 would have been another option, but I think that White has nothing special after the simple 13...♗d7

12...g6 13.♕g4

Now Black is no longer in time to castle kingside.



13...♗xc3+

A very human move, but it seems as though after this logical move Black is just faring badly. After 13...0-0 14.♘ge2 ♗d7 15.0-0 White keeps the very important option of playing ♗g5-♗f6 next. The best try might have been 13...♘c4 14.♘ge2 ♘xe3 15.fxe3 0-0 but after 16.♘g3 White's position also looks clearly better.

14.bxc3 ♕d5

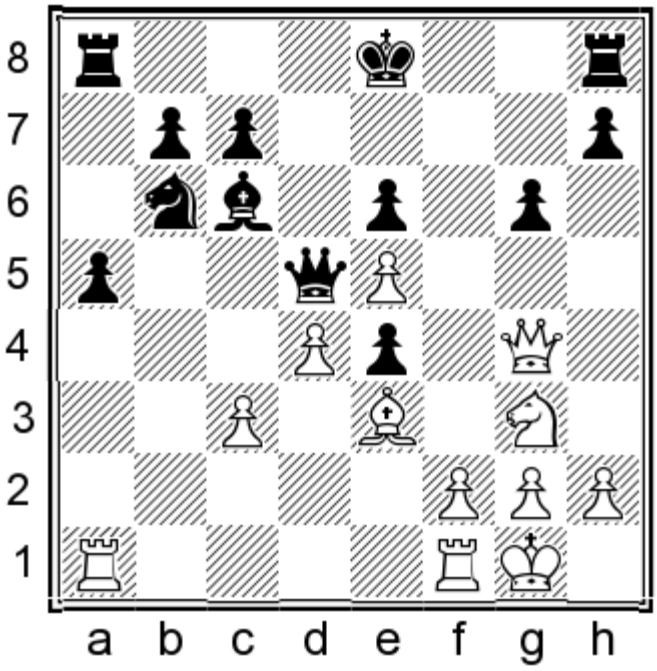
Karjakin continues his strategy to play on the light squares and Black's a-pawn could also be very dangerous, but the only problem is that Black is not in time!

15.♘e2 ♗d7 16.0-0

White castles before deciding whether to play ♘f4 or ♘g3.

16...♕c4

Black cannot protect the e4-pawn. After the logical 16...a5 17.♘g3! is very strong. 17...♗c6



18.♘xe4! And the game is over... 18...♕xe4 19.♕xe6+ ♔f8 20.♗h6# What a beautiful mate!

17.♘g3 ♗c6

Black's hope is to exchange the bishop against the white knight, but that is just a dream...

18.♖a5!

A very nice move! White continues his rush and ♖c5 next looks pretty deadly.

18...0-0-0!

A very good practical decision. After 18...0-0 19.h4 White's attack should be decisive.

19.♖c5

Kramnik is going for the e6 pawn. Playing 19.♖xa7 ♔b8 20.♖a3 was probably quite tempting, but somehow Black is still holding on the light squares, although White should be much better.

19...♕b3 20.c4 ♔b8

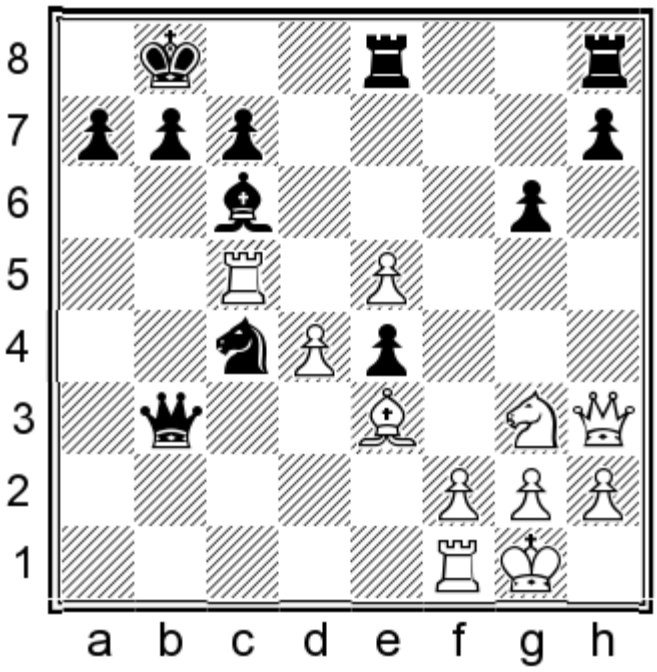
Karjakin continues defending very well. 20...♖he8 was losing on the spot: 21.d5 ♗d7 22.d6! ♗c6 23.♘xe4 with a totally winning position for White.

21.♕xe6 ♖de8

Black needs to go for the c4-pawn, because if White was in time to play d5 the game would be instantly over.

22.♕h3 ♘xc4

The position remains quite sharp.

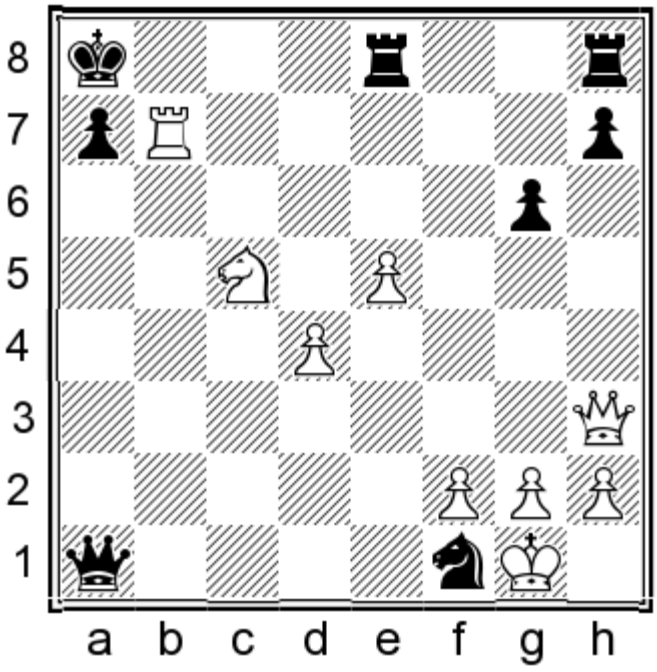


23.♖xc6!

This move had, of course, been planned for a couple of moves already, but it is still a very nice one. By sacrificing an exchange White completely destroys Black's pawn structure and the white knight attains a perfect position on c5. But of course all this required very precise calculation.

23...bxc6

23...♘xe3 doesn't seem to work: 24.♘xe4 ♕a4 (*24...♕d5 25.♖c5 ♕xe4 26.fxe3* And White's central pawns should give him an advantage.) 25.♖xc7! What a beautiful move! 25...♔xc7 (*25...♘xf1* didn't work as after *26.♖xb7+ ♔a8 27.♘c5 ♕a1* and here White has the amazing



28.♖b8+!! ♔xb8 29.♕b3+ with mate to follow soon.) 26.♕xe3 White's central pawns and the great knight basically give him a winning position.

24.♘xe4 ♘b6

Black tries to consolidate.

25.♘c5

Finally the big tactical battle is over and White's position is clearly better.

25...♕d5 26.♖c1

A logical move, but 26.♖a1 might have been even stronger, with the idea of playing ♗g5-♕a3 next.

26...♔a8

Karjakin was already in some time-trouble and it is very hard to give any advice to Black here. All White needs to do is to get the queen from h3 to a3 to end the game, which is why maybe a move like 26...h5 would have made sense, although Black's position remains very bad.

27.♘a6

A good decision. White gives up the great position on c5 to collect the c6 pawn.

27...♔b7 28.♘b4 ♕f7

Not giving White the chance to play ♕f3 next.

29.♕g4

29.♗g5 with the idea of playing ♕a3 next also looks deadly.

29...♘d5 30.♘xc6

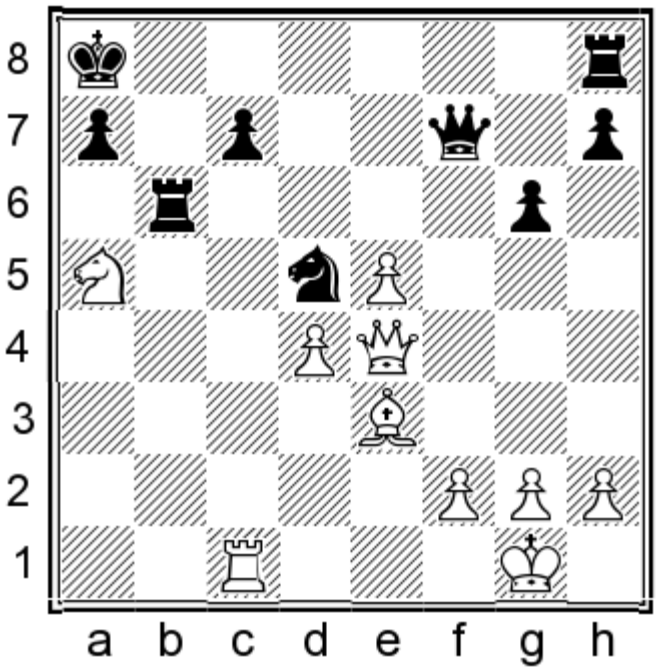
The game is almost over...

30...♖e6 31.♘a5+

The white attack continues and all Black can do is watch...

31...♔a8 32.♕e4 ♖b6

Karjakin continues trying to hold things together.



33.g4!

Very well played by Kramnik again. White not only wants to play ♖c5 next, but he also protects against ...♕f5 in many lines.

33...h5

It is difficult to advise anything better... 33...♖d8 34.♘c6 and the game should not last much longer...

34.♖c5

The knight on d5 cannot be protected without losing material.

34...♖d8 35.♘c6

What domination by the white pieces!

35...♖xc6 36.♖xc6 hxg4

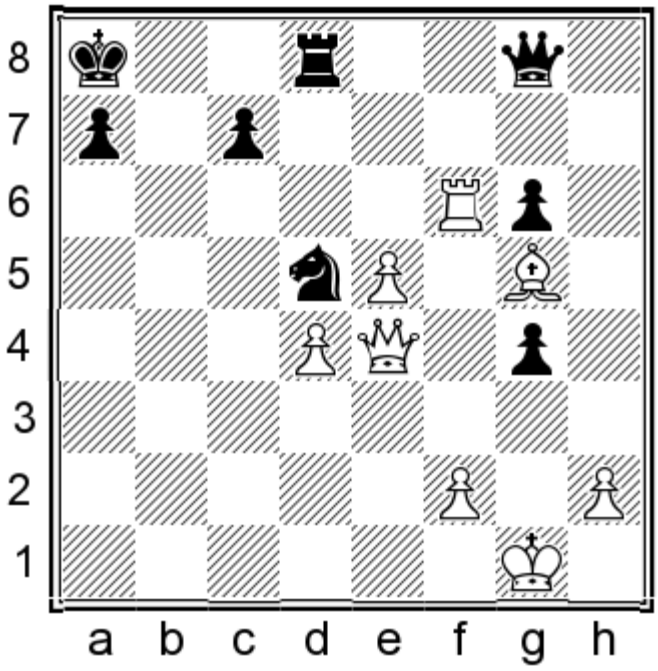
The only thing which stops Black from resigning is the very strong position of the knight on d5, who actually got there on move 5!

37.♖f6 ♕h7 38.♗g5!

Another very tricky move, especially in time-trouble. Too many black pieces are hanging and White's e-pawn could also become very dangerous.

38...♕g8

This blunder in a lost position doesn't really matter anymore...



39.♖xg6

What a fantastic game by Kramnik. Great preparation followed by great play.... Karjakin fought well, but his bad position and Kramnik's amazing mastery left him in a hopeless situation.

1–0

GAME 27
V. Topalov (2785)
V. Kramnik (2787)
FIDE Candidates 2014
Khanty-Mansiysk RUS (6.1)
19.03.2014, [D37]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

Since their World Championship match in 2006, Topalov and Kramnik have not really played against each other. We probably all remember their famous scandal known as 'toilet-gate' and it seems like they still haven't made peace with each other, because neither before nor after this game was there a handshake...

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7

The Queen's Gambit Declined — a very solid opening. Kramnik's idea was clear; he tries to play a safe setup and knows that Topalov will try to crush him at any cost due to their old affair, and he will try to fight back if he gets a chance.

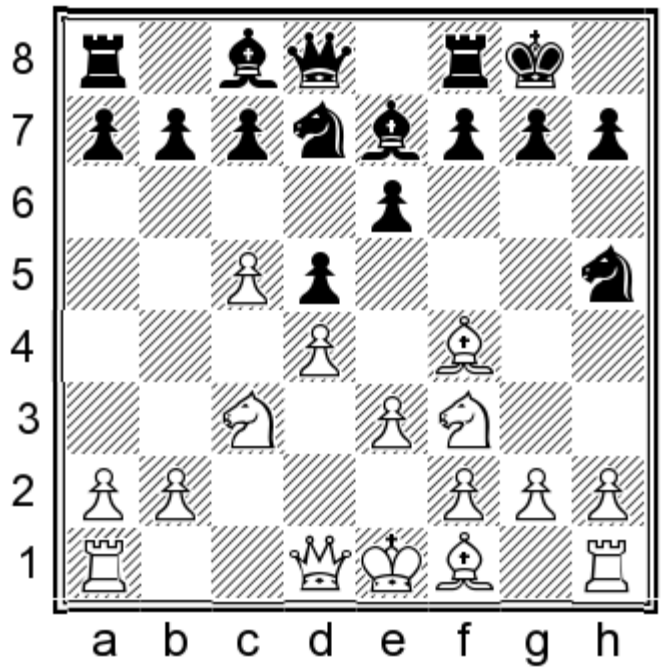
5.♗f4

5.♗g5 is the other main line.

5...0-0 6.e3 ♘bd7

White has a wide range of choices here. Topalov chooses the most common move and grabs space on the queenside. With his last move, Black prepared to play ...c5 himself.

7.c5 ♘h5



7...c6 and;

7...♘e4 are also playable alternatives for Black, but Kramnik has already played the text move on several occasions.

8.♗e5!?

This move has been seen in only a few games before. During the press conference Topalov called it a dubious move, which can be very dangerous for one game, because the arising lines are very sharp — and if Black is not well prepared he might walk into danger as happened in the game. 8.♗d3 occurred in almost all the previous games.

8...c6 9.♗d3 g6

9...♘xe5 could be met by 10.♘xe5 ♘f6 11.f4 with a potential attack with g4-g5. Black should look for a more active reaction.

10.h4!?

was played by Topalov without thinking. Deep preparation, since we already had a new position on the board. White would like to save his strong bishop with ♗h2, while if Black takes ♘xe5 ♘xe5, then the h4 move fits perfectly to an attack with g4-h5.

10...f5?!

Topalov called this another mistake. Black would like to lock the kingside to stay safer against the potential attacks, but he weakens the dark squares too much. 10...b6! would have been more principled, to undermine the queenside. 11.b4 a5! Compared to the game, this works properly now as the bishop on e5 is hanging in some lines. 12.a3 White has to keep his pawn structure intact, but this allows the standard trade of the light-squared bishops, which seems to solve Black's problems. (Now *12.b5* is just bad in view of *12...bxc5 13.bxc6 ♘xe5! 14.♘xe5 cxd4 15.exd4 ♗b4*∓ and

Black is better.) 12...♗a6!

11.♗h2!

White manages to save his bishop and now the holes on the dark-squares, combined with the space advantage on the queenside, start to tell.

11...b6?!

Without being able to play ...a5 on b4, this move just weakens his own c6 pawn. 11...f4 playing like in the game, just without the ...b6-b4 pair of moves, was an improved version for Black. 11...♗xh4 was also better than the game, although in any case White's position is preferable. He probably simply plays 12.b4 with the idea of b5 and ♕a4 with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

12.b4 f4

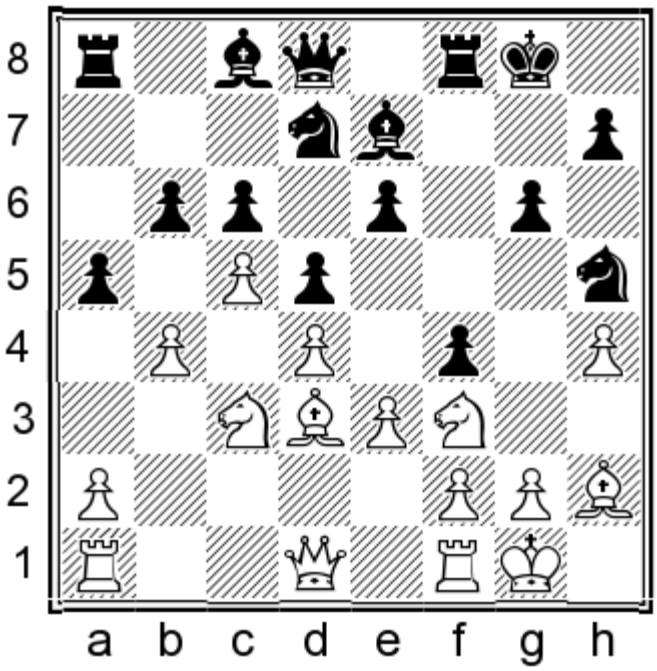
The problem is that 12...a5 is met by 13.b5 ♗b7 14.cxb6 ♕xb6 15.0-0 followed by ♖b1. White is better prepared for the opening of the queenside, especially because of the strong bishop on h2. This is the reason why Kramnik wanted to shut it out from the game with his f4 move.

13.0-0!

Simple and strong! Topalov has already claimed a big advantage at this point.

13...a5

Kramnik tries to be consequent and principled, but White is better prepared for the opening of the queenside.



13...♗xh4 was a better chance, or at least Black has an extra pawn. 14.b5 ♗b7 (*14...cxb5 15.c6±* is always bad for Black.) 15.♕a4! White seems to be able to overpress the c6 square, but maybe Black can hope for some chances after the very ugly computer move 15...♘b8! Other moves are just losing, e.g. (*15...cxb5 16.♗xb5+–; 15...♖c8 16.♕xa7+–; 15...♕c8 16.♘xh4+–*)

14.b5!

As we had already seen in some lines, this is always the critical breakthrough in this variation. It always seems to work effectively in this game.

14...bxc5

14...♗b7 could simply have been met by 15.bxc6 ♗xc6 16.cxb6 ♘xb6 (*16...♕xb6 17.♕e2*± Black has serious problems with the e6 pawn. White is ready to take on f4.) 17.♘e5± ♗e8 18.♕g4!± and White is dominating!

15.bxc6 ♘b8 16.♗b5

White manages to save his c6 pawn, which completely destroys the co-ordination between the black pieces. Kramnik tries to eliminate it at any cost, but he does not succeed. White can also support it by playing ♘e5.

16...♗a6

16...c4 is also bad in view of 17.exf4 (*17.♕d2* is also fine.) 17...♘xf4 18.♘e2! trading the knights with the idea of opening the h2-b8 diagonal.

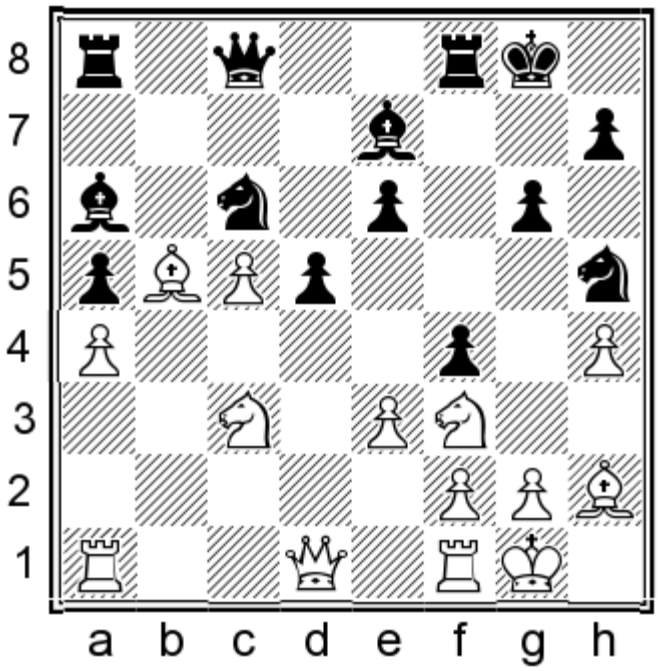
17.a4!

White obviously keeps his bishop on b5, or at least he is only ready to trade it if he gets connected passed-pawns on b5-c6. Black should not go for it.

17...♕c8

Black finally gets rid of the c6 pawn, but his position tactically collapses.

18.dxc5 ♘xc6



19.♘xd5!

The punishment for Black for his weird opening moves. He loses both of his central pawns. It is rare to see Kramnik losing after only 19 moves... I am sure that his bad relationship with Topalov also affected this result. Topalov pointed out that White can claim a positional advantage after 19.♖c1, but of course the move of the game is much better.

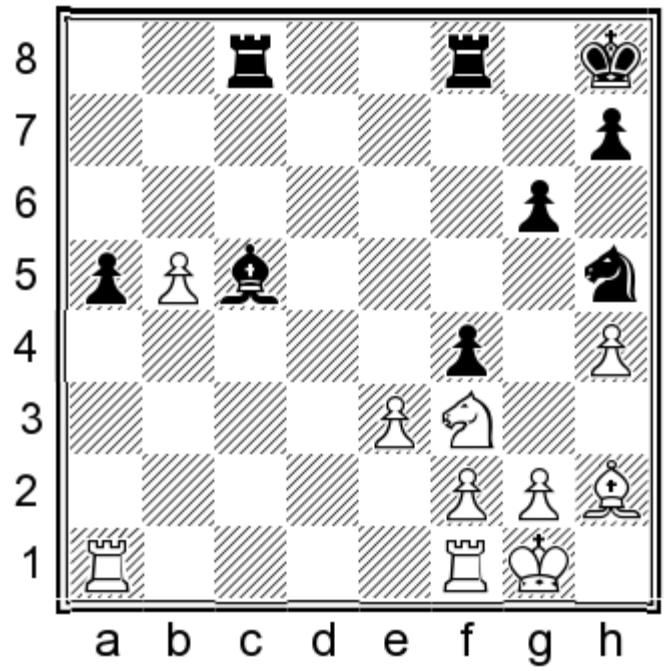
19...exd5 20.♕xd5+ ♔h8 21.♕xc6!

But not 21.♗xc6 because of 21...♘f6! and the bishop cannot be protected.

21...♕xc6 22.♗xc6 ♖ac8

22...♗xf1 23.♗xa8 also leads to a healthy material advantage for White. 23...♗a6 (*23...♖xa8 24.♔xf1 ♗xc5 25.♗xf4 ♘xf4 26.exf4+–* the two extra pawns should easily win.) 24.♗d5 ♗xc5 25.♖c1± should also be a technical win for White.

23.♗b5! ♗xb5 24.axb5 ♗xc5



White can choose between several tempting simplifications.

25.♖xa5!

Topalov makes the correct decision to remain with only one extra pawn, but with all his pieces in active positions. The lines after 25.exf4 ♘xf4 26.♗xf4 (*26.♖xa5 ♘h3+! 27.gxh3 ♖xf3*) 26...♖xf4 27.♖xa5 ♖b4 offered Black much better practical chances for survival.

25...fxe3 26.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 27.♔h1 ♖c2?

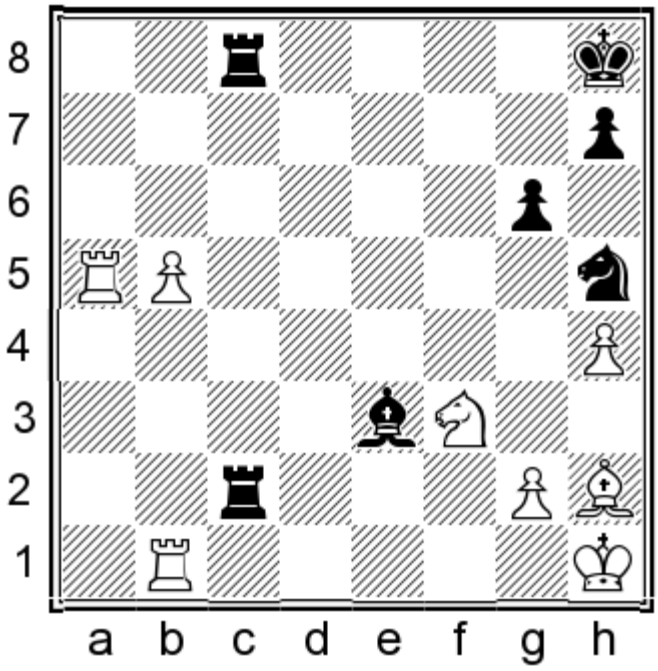
The last inaccuracy, but the position was objectively lost. 27...♘f6 28.♖b1 ♘d5 would have offered some small hopes for Black.

28.♖b1!

White is ready to advance his b-pawn and Black cannot get his rook to the b-file because the bishop on h2 has been

doing a great job for the entire game.

28...♖fc8



28...♗b6 29.♖a6+– and Black cannot maintain the blockade. Black cannot get any counterplay with 28...♘f4 as White simply advances his pawn: 29.b6+–

29.♖aa1!

A last precise move before advancing the b-pawn. White had to control his back rank.

29...♗b6 30.♗e5+!

Giving some air for the king on h2 with tempo!

30...♔g8 31.♖a6!

Black cannot hold his bishop and he is forced to offer a free pass to the b-pawn.

31...♗e3 32.b6 ♖c1+ 33.♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 34.♔h2 ♖b1

White can choose between several easy wins. Topalov goes for the most direct one.

35.g4! ♗f4+

35...♘f4 drops a piece after 36.♘g5 threatening mate on a8! 36...♔f8 37.b7! ♖xb7 38.♖f6+ ♔e7 (*38...♔g8 39.♗xf4+–*) 39.♖f7++–

36.♔g2 ♗xe5 37.♘xe5 ♘f4+ 38.♔f3 ♘e6

There was a pretty win after 38...♘d5 39.♖a8+ ♔g7 40.♖a7+! ♔f6 41.♘d7+! ♔e6 42.b7+– and White promotes his pawn!

39.b7! ♖b3+ 40.♔f2 ♖b2+ 41.♔e3

Black resigned in view of 41.♔e3 ♖b3+ 42.♔d2 he is out of checks and after 42...♘f8 43.♖a7!+– followed by ♘c6, promotes the pawn. After Kramnik's inaccuracies in the opening, Topalov just won a perfect game.

1–0

GAME 28
V. Kramnik (2787)
S. Mamedyarov (2757)
FIDE Candidates 2014
Khanty-Mansiysk RUS (7.4)
21.03.2014, [D38]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

After a long theoretical battle, Kramnik managed to achieve a very nice position and it even looked as though White's win should not be far away. However, by blundering into a nice tactic by Black, the game became very chaotic. Before move 40, Mamedyarov already looked like he was the one who was winning and indeed he had a big chance to close the game out. Suddenly, the game turned one more time after Black's blunders and finally Kramnik was the one with the full point in the tournament cross table. A really exciting and fighting game.

1.d4

Kramnik continues to open his games with 1.d4; quite often he likes to vary with 1.c4.

1...♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3

White continues with his main repertoire. Kramnik usually avoids allowing the Nimzo with White, as he is actually one of the biggest experts with Black.

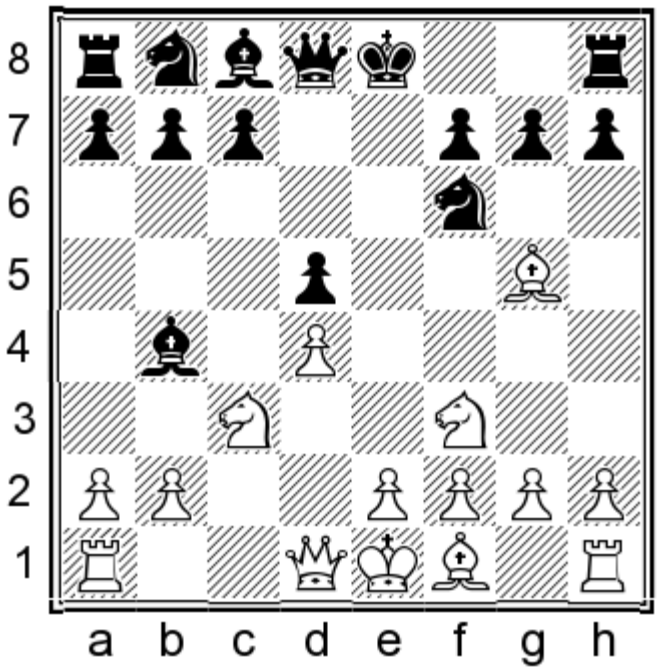
3...d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4

4...dxc4 already occurred in the Anand-Kramnik game in round 3 with a short draw, but we can be sure that Kramnik had some novelty in mind.

5.cxd5

5.♕a4+ ♘c6 is the other main line.

5...exd5 6.♗g5



6...♘bd7

A relatively rare move-order by Mamedyarov. A more popular line is 6...h6 7.♗h4 c5 8.e3 c4 with very sharp and unclear play.

7.♕c2

White is also going for a slightly unusual move order. It could be that Kramnik wanted to avoid 7.e3 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♗g3 ♘e4

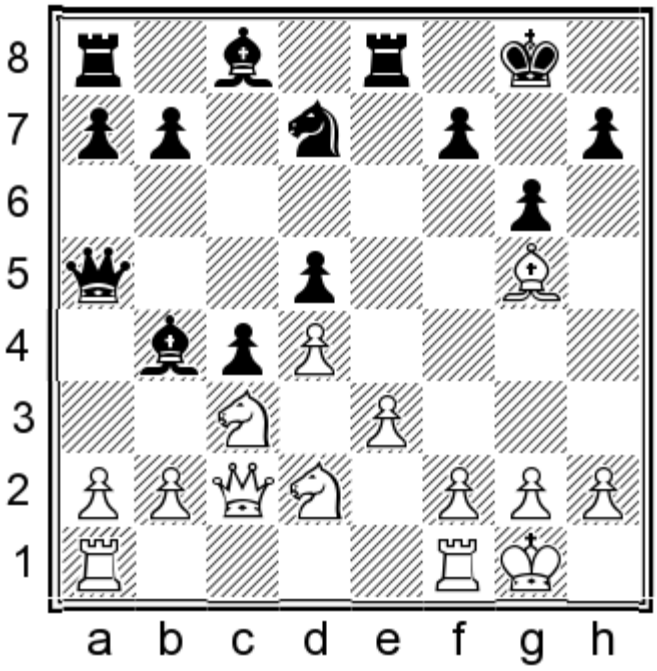
7...c5 8.e3 ♕a5 9.♗d3

And now we are back in a very popular line of the Ragozin that has been played at the highest level for many years.

9...c4 10.♗f5 0-0 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♘d2

This is also all theory. White's move 12.♘d2 is very logical, because soon we will see that his main idea is to play f3-e4.

12...g6 13.♗xd7 ♘xd7



14.h4!?

A very interesting move in my opinion — and also quite a rare one. At the top level it was just played once before, in the game Cheparinov-Mamedyarov in 2007, where White won quite easily. The idea of the h4-move is simply to play h5 at an opportune moment, which could be quite unpleasant for Black. Keeping the idea of f3-e4 and later attacking the black king in mind, a move like h4 makes perfect sense. In a rapid game against Svidler, Kramnik tried 14.e4 ♗xc3 15.♕xc3 ♕xc3 16.bxc3 dxe4 17.♘xc4 ♘b6 but the position is just close to equal.

14...b5?!

Mameyarov improves on his game, but to me this move just doesn't look like the right one. In the game Cheparinov-Mamedyarov there appeared 14...♘b6 15.f3 ♗f8 16.e4 ♗g7 17.♗e3 with some advantage for White.

15.a4!

A typical and very strong move. First of all White forces Black to give up his dark-squared bishop.

15...♗xc3

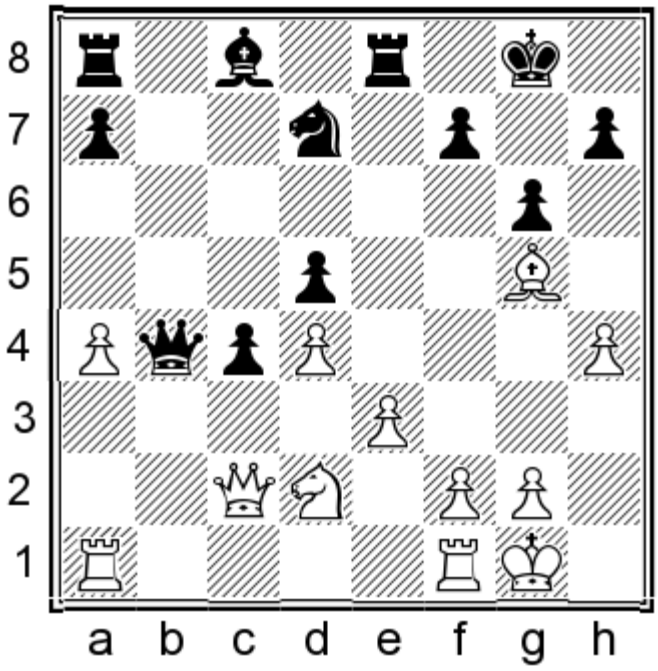
There is no other way to defend against axb5.

16.bxc3 b4

Another forced move.

17.cxb4 ♕xb4

And here comes White's maneuver, which basically crushes all Black's hopes of being fine:



18.♘b1!

The key move, and of course Kramnik saw it before playing 15.a4!. The white knight is going to take up a fantastic position on c3, from where the pawn on d5 is going to be under attack and the f3-e4 idea becomes quite realistic.

18...♕d6

Mamedyarov decides to put his queen on c6. Maybe 18...♕a5 would have been a better choice, but in any case White's advantage is clear.

19.♘c3 ♕c6 20.♖fb1

White can always gain control over the b-file by playing ♗f4 which makes things even harder for Black. Now the threat is to play ♖b5.

20...♗a6 21.♕d1!

Another great move by White. The white queen is planning to take up a perfect position on f3, attacking the d5 pawn and helping to develop an attack on the kingside.

21...f6

Probably the only way to defend the d5 pawn in a decent manner.

22.♗f4

Perhaps 22.♗h6 would have saved White a tempo?!

22...♖ad8

Black tries to stay solid in a very passive and bad position.

23.♕f3 ♘f8 24.♗h6

White doesn’t give Black a chance to play ...♘e6 next. Black’s pieces are almost totally paralyzed.

24...♔f7 25.♖b2

White continues to put his pieces in perfect positions. The b-file is now under eternal control.

25...♘e6 26.♖ab1 ♘g7

Black has finally brought his knight into the game, but it does not improve his position a lot.

27.g4!

Kramnik correctly plays for domination. There is no reason to give Black an opportunity to play ...♘f5.

27...♔g8

Black stands badly, but at least he is solid. It is still not so clear how to break the black fortress?

28.♕f4

Kramnik continues what he started, improving his pieces to the maximum. Maybe White’s idea could be to prepare f3-e4 now...

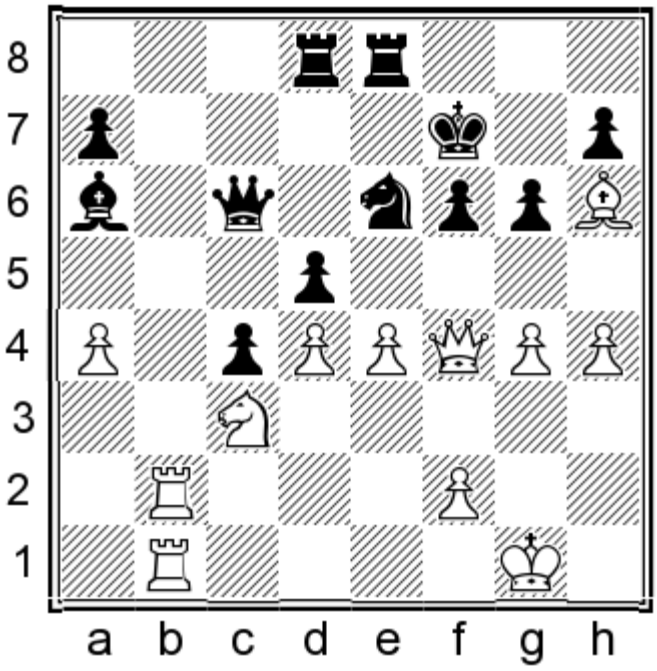
28...♔f7

Black probably doesn’t have any better option than to just keep on waiting. A move like 28...♕d6 29.♕xd6 ♖xd6 would lead to a very bad endgame.

29.e4!?

Finally Whites has had enough of “slow play” and the action starts.

29...♘e6



White calculated the forced line after 29...dxe4 30.d5 ♕d6 31.♖b7+! This move is not too difficult to find, but it still needs to be evaluated correctly. 31...♗xb7 32.♖xb7+ ♖e7 33.♕xd6 ♖xd6 34.♖xe7+ ♔xe7 35.♗xg7 and White's position is probably just winning. 2 pieces and a passed d-pawn is too much...

30.exd5?

White blunders after having played a great game. 30.♕e3 would have caused huge problems for Black. 30...♘c5 (After the more passive *30...♘c7 31.f3* White's position is just fantastic.) 31.exd5 ♕d7 (*31...♖xe3 32.dxc6 ♖xc3 33.dxc5* White should be close to winning here.) 32.♕f3 White is a pawn up and the black king is more exposed than the white one, so White's advantage should be quite serious here.

30...♘xf4 31.dxc6

At first sight this endgame just looks winning for White, but Black has a great trick:

31...g5!!

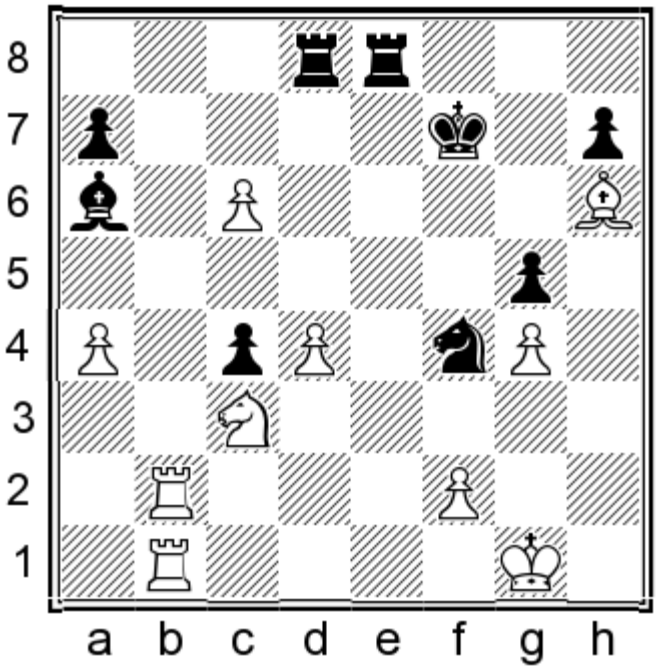
It is quite obvious that Kramnik over-looked this reaction. Suddenly White cannot save the bishop on h6.

32.hxg5

What to do for White?! It is not an option to play 32.h5 ♖xd4 as with a dead bishop on h6 Black's position should be close to winning.;

After 32.c7 ♖xd4 33.hxg5 fxg5 34.♖b8 ♘e6 it is also very hard to say whether White can save the game or not...

32...fxg5



33.c7

Now Black has two very pleasant options: 33.♗xg5?? of course just loses to 33...♘h3+

33...♖d6

As already mentioned in the line above, the position after 33...♖xd4 34.♖b8 ♘e6 is much better for Black.

34.♗xg5

It’s better to get a pawn than nothing at all.

34...♘h3+ 35.♔g2 ♘xg5 36.d5

White’s position looks lost, but still 2 pawns and some active play can sometimes lead to complications, especially in zeitnot.

36...♗c8!

A strong move. The black bishop is finally not staring at the c4 pawn anymore, but instead attacking the g4 pawn and stopping the c7 pawn.

37.♖b8

White keeps on trying his luck. 37.♘b5 loses on the spot after 37...♖xd5 38.♘xa7 ♖d7!

37...♖f6

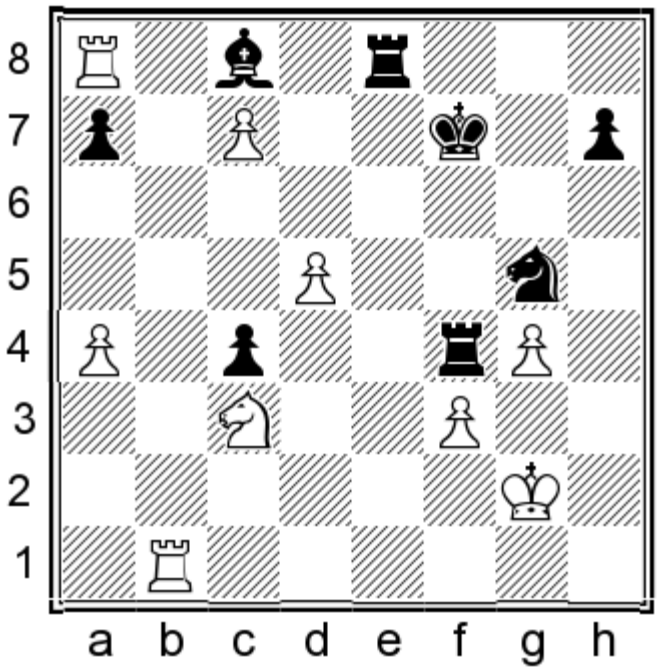
It seems like Black has everything under control and just wants to play ...♖d4 next.

38.♖a8!

Kramnik finds the only resource to keep the game going. The idea is to play ♖bb8 next.

38...♖f4 39.f3!

Once again the only move to stay in the game.



39.♖bb8 is losing as after 39...♖xg4+ 40.♔f1 ♘f3 a mate on g1 is coming.

39...♖xf3?

After having done everything right, Mamedyarov suddenly miscalculates — but the winning line was of course very hard to find... 39...♘xf3 was the winning move. 40.♔g3 I guess Mamedyarov stopped calculating the variation here, but it was too early... 40...♖xg4+! 41.♔xf3 And now Black has the amazing 41...♖g6!! What a fantastic move, which is of course very hard to find during the game. Black's position is totally winning because of the tactical threats and White cannot avoid losing some of his material.

40.d6?

And Kramnik also misses his chance to escape. 40.♖bb8! White should have had no fear. 40...♖xc3 41.♖xc8 Of course White's position looks very dangerous, but in fact Black doesn't have anything better than giving a perpetual check after 41...♖c2+ 42.♔g3 ♖c3+ 43.♔g2

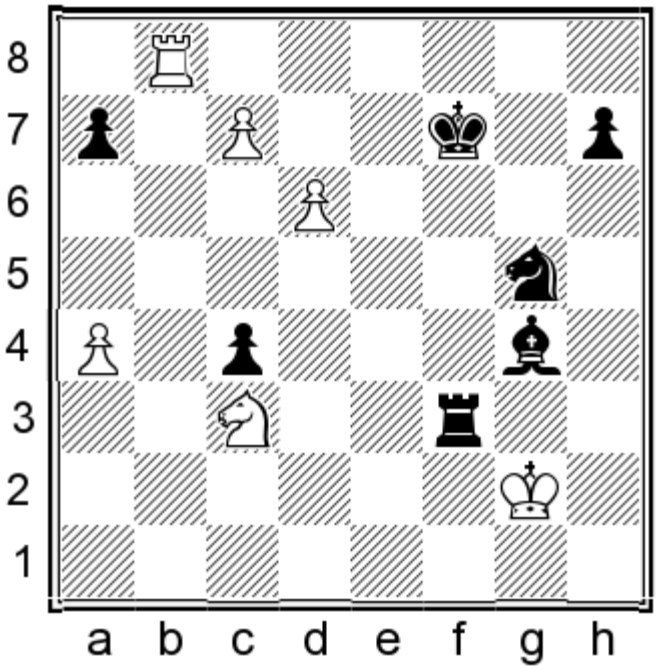
40...♗xg4

Time-trouble is over and Black is back on the winner's road, although the position remains very sharp.

41.♖xe8

Both players took some time to relax after the crazy zeitnot and the game continues on a high level.

41...♔xe8 42.♖b8+ ♔f7



43.♖d8!

White finds the only practical chance. The idea of playing d7 next is a huge threat and although the white king is lonely and unprotected, Black needs to play very accurately.

43...♗h3+

Of course Black has no time to lose.

44.♔h2

44.♔g1 ♖f1+ 45.♔h2 ♖f2+ would lead to the position in the game.

44...♖xc3!

The correct move. After the premature 44...♖f2+ 45.♔g3 ♖g2+ 46.♔f4! the white king would escape.

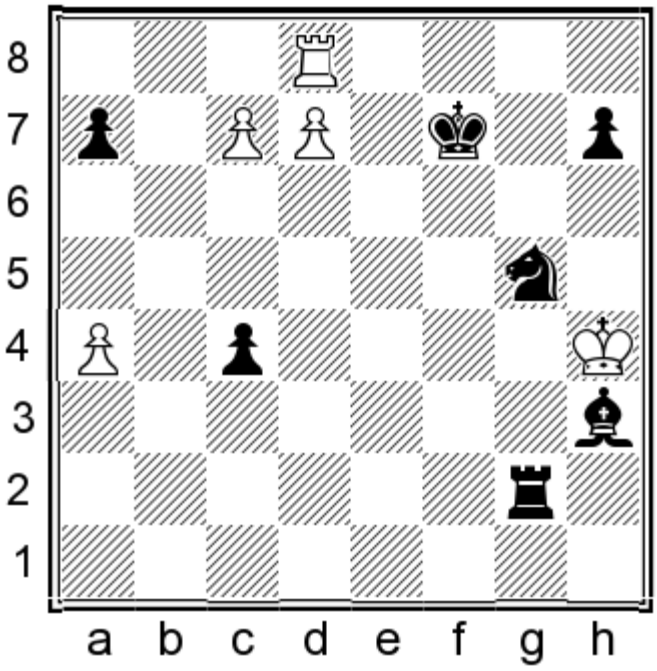
45.d7

As we can see, things are very forced.

45...♖c2+ 46.♔g3 ♖g2+!

Now the white king can’t escape anymore.

47.♔h4



47.♔f4 ♘e6+! Black is just in time to cover everything. 48.♔f3 ♘xc7 49.♖f8+ ♔xf8 50.d8=♕+ ♘e8 Two pieces and two extra pawns should be enough to win the game easily.

47...♗e6!!

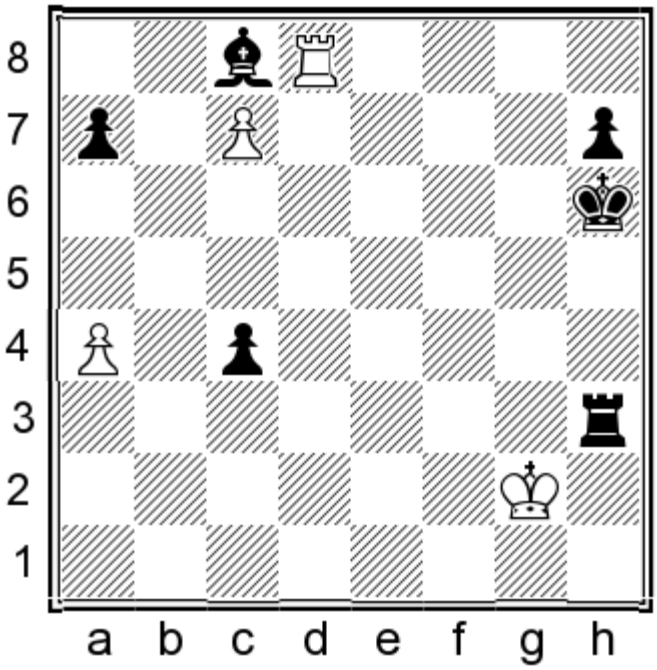
What a fantastic move! White is in time to queen, but not in time to save the game!

48.♖f8+

The only move. 48.c8=♕ would lead to mate in 2... 48...♘f3+ 49.♔h5 ♖h2# What a beautiful position!

48...♔xf8?

This move is so hard to understand! After playing some fantastic moves, Mamedyarov suddenly makes a huge error when the win was within his grasp. 48...♔g6! leads to a winning position. 49.♖g8+ (*49.♖f6+ ♔xf6 50.d8=♕+ ♔f7* and as the white queen has no more checks Black will just mate the white king.) 49...♔h6! and now we are in a very forced line. 50.♖xg5 ♖h2+ 51.♔g3 ♗xd7 52.♖d5 ♖h3+ 53.♔g2 ♗c8 54.♖d8 At first sight the position might look like a draw, but once again Black's position is winning thanks to a beautiful resource:



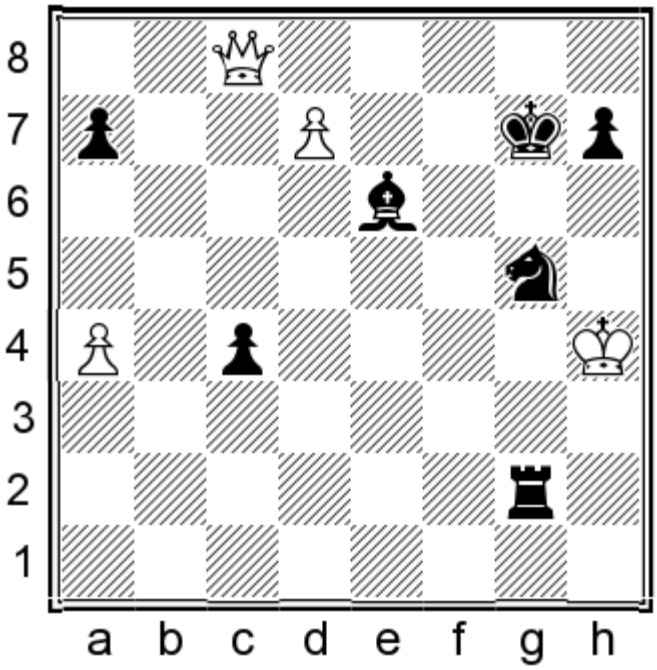
54...c3! 55.♖xc8 c2 And Black queens first...

49.c8=♕+!

Exactly! 49.d8=♕+ ♔f7 was winning for Black.

49...♔g7?!

Mamedyarov panics...



The trick now is that after 49...♔f7 White promotes to a knight! 50.d8=♘+! Could it be that Mamedyarov blundered this?! 50...♔f6 but the position should still be close to a draw. 51.♘xe6 ♘xe6 52.♕xc4 ♖g7 with very good chances to save the game.

50.♕b7!

After this move, the game is over.

50...♘f3+

Nothing saves Black anymore. d8=♕ check is a threat and the rook on g2 is hanging.

51.♕xf3 ♖h2+

It is clear that Mamedyarov must have been very frustrated to see his position is now lost when the win had been so close.

52.♔g5 h6+ 53.♔f4 ♖h4+ 54.♔e5

What an amazing game! All-in-all, it is clear that White should be very happy achieving a full point, although the first 30 moves of the game were clearly dominated by Kramnik, while the next 20 went to Mamedyarov. It is then only with the huge blunder 48...♔xf8 that Black offered a present to his opponent.

1–0

GAME 29
D. Andreikin (2709)
V. Topalov (2785)
FIDE Candidates 2014
Khanty-Mansiysk RUS (7.2)
21.03.2014, [D30]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

Andreikin scored his first win in a highly unusual game.

1.♘f3 d5 2.d4 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♗g5 h6 5.♗xf6 ♕xf6 6.♘bd2

Andreikin employed this sideline succesfully against Kramnik last year. That game continued with 6...g6 and was analyzed in detail in our newsletter. Topalov was well-prepared and came up with an effective plan.

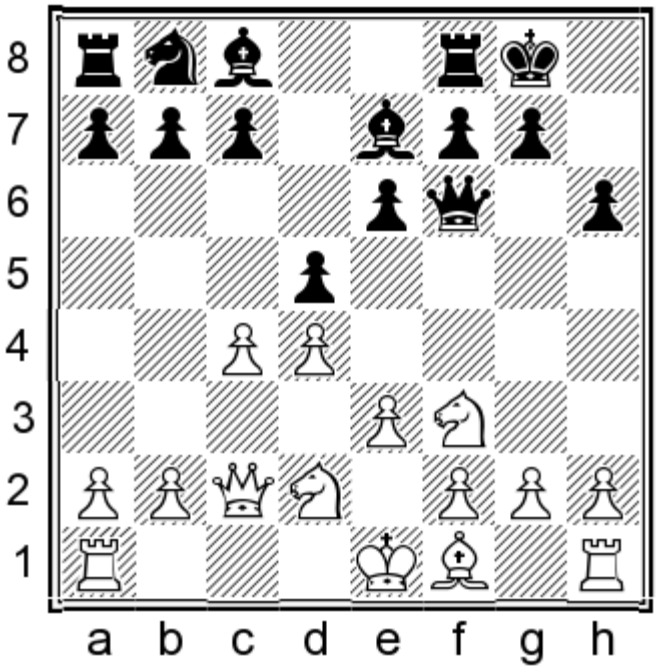
6...♗e7

Black wants to finish the development as quickly as possible with ...0-0 followed by challenging the central pawns with ...c5. Usually Black is worried about his queen becoming misplaced on f6, but here White cannot do anything with it.

7.♕c2

This is the novelty. Hardly an improvement, but Black was also fine in the previous games.

7...0-0 8.e3



Obviously White should not go for the poisoned pawn with 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♕xc7? ♘c6 followed by ...♗f5 and ...♘b4, with more than enough compensation -White needs too many moves to castle.

8...c5!

With his ♕c2 move, White wanted to prevent — or at least make it harder to execute — the ...c5 idea, but Topalov is not afraid of a pawn sacrifice for the initiative.

9.dxc5

If White starts with 9.cxd5 exd5 10.dxc5 Black can either transpose to the game with ...♘d7 or he has the extra possibility of playing 10...♗f5

9...♘d7!

Black would like to recapture the pawn. White should try to keep it somehow, otherwise Black simply ends up in a slightly better position thanks to the two bishops.

10.cxd5 exd5

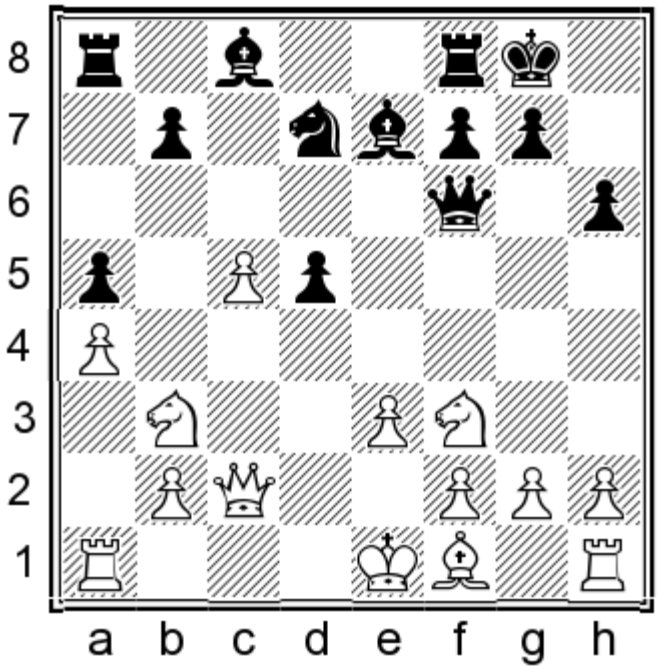
10...♘xc5!? was an alternative to sacrifice a pawn. White still needs a few moves to secure his king's position, but this gives Black enough time to find counterplay. 11.dxe6 ♗xe6 12.♗c4 (*12.♘d4 ♖ac8* looks very dangerous.) 12...♗f5 White already has to be very careful to avoid getting into trouble. 13.e4! (*13.♕c3 ♘a4 14.♕xf6 ♗xf6*∓ wins back the pawn with a better endgame.) 13...♘xe4! 14.♘xe4 ♕g6 15.♘fd2 ♗b4 Black wins back the piece, but White is just in time to solve his problems. 16.0-0 ♗xd2 17.♕xd2 ♗xe4 18.f3 with equality.

11.♘b3

Trying to hold the pawn for as long as possible.

11...a5 12.a4

Knowing the consequences, this is a slightly risky decision.



12.♗e2 was safer, although it gives Black a very easy game. 12...a4 13.♘bd4 ♘xc5 14.0-0 ♗d7 Black has an isolated pawn, but the two bishops and the active pieces give him the initiative. ...♖fc8 is coming next with a tempo.

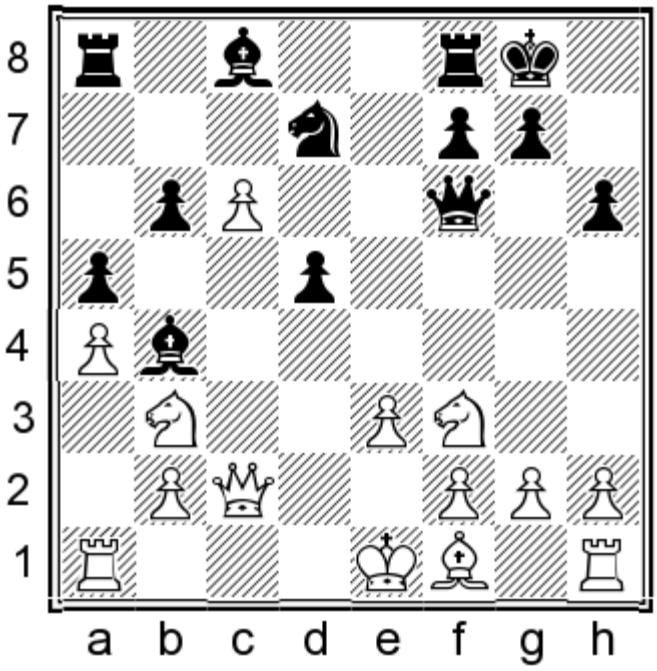
12...b6!

Black wants to open the files as long as the king stands on e1! The bishop is coming to b4 with a really unpleasant check!

13.c6!

The only chance to keep the position closed.

13...♗b4+



14.♔d1!

Of course, such moves are not advisable in general. However, in the current position this is the best chance. White is going to place his knight on d4 and his bishop on b5. The structure is static, therefore it is very difficult to open the center against the d1-king. 14.♘bd2 would have strongly been met by 14...♘c5 15.♗b5 ♗f5 when Black at least wins back the b2 pawn as ♕c1 loses to ...♘b3.

14...♘c5

14...♘b8!? was a good alternative, but for such a strong dynamic player as Topalov, such backward moves generally don't come into consideration. White cannot hold the c6-pawn for long... 15.♘bd4 ♗c5 16.♗b5 ♗g4! Threatening to play ♗xd4, therefore the only move is 17.h3 ♗xf3+ 18.♘xf3 ♘xc6 Black has restored the material balance and is ready to open the center with d4! Black has an edge here.

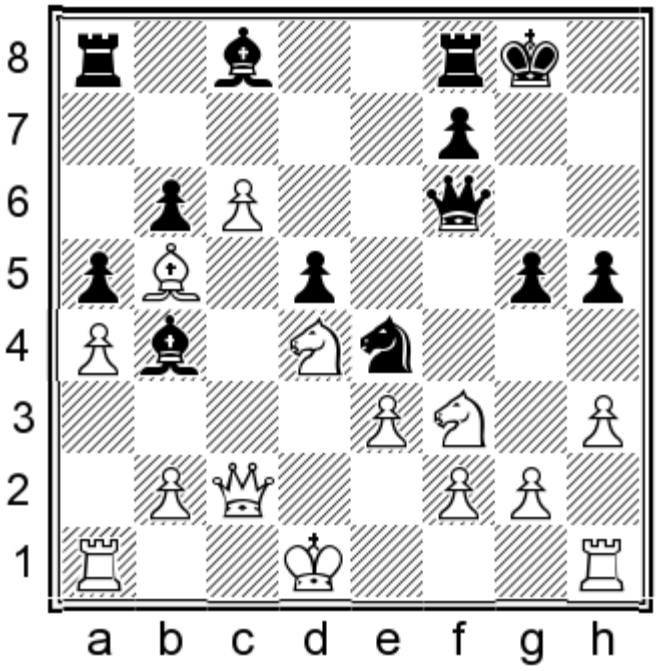
15.♘bd4 ♘e4?

An active move, but Topalov misses Andreikin's subtle plan and he soon ends up without compensation. The key to Black's counterplay would have been to destroy the stability of the d4-knight. The most effective way to do this was 15...♗g4! 16.♗b5 ♘e6! 17.♔c1 ♗c5! Black focuses all his pieces on the two white knights. White cannot hold them for long, which means the salvation of Black's problems.

16.♗b5 g5?

Topalov was sure that the only way for White to connect the rooks and give shelter to his king was ♔e2, ♖hd1 and ♔f1, therefore he prevents this idea with the ...g4 plan when f2 falls. However, Andreikin had a different idea in mind for hiding his king and the ...g5 move soon becomes a self-destruction operation... 16...♗g4 was more natural, although there is no full compensation after 17.♔e2!± followed by ♖hd1 and ♔f1. That is why Topalov tried to scare his opponent with g5-g4... (*17.♔c1* is less clear now because of *17...♗h5!* and ♗g6 next.)

17.h3 h5

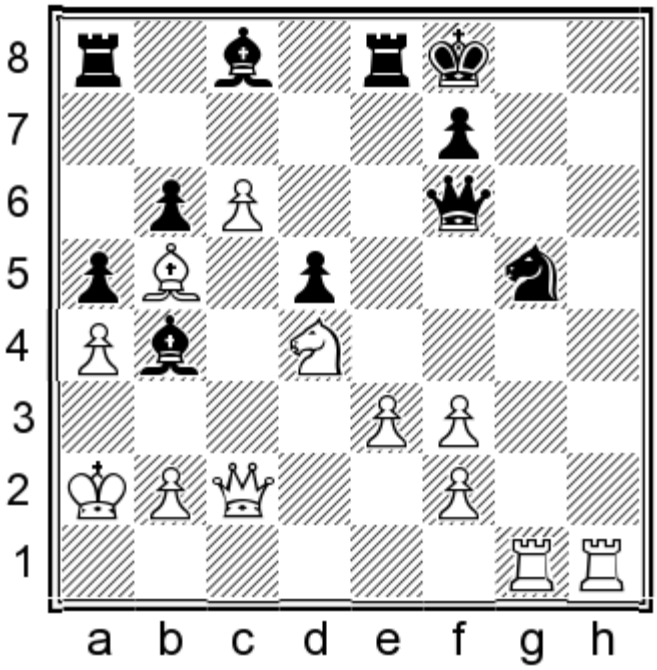


18.♔c1!

An unique idea from Andreikin! The point is already clear: he simply wants to play ♔b1–a2 and ♖ad1, executing an artificial long castle. The d4, b5 and c6 pieces are so stable that Black has no chances to create any counterplay.

18...♗c5

The tactical justification of White's plan was that 18...g4 19.hxg4 hxg4 is met by 20.♔b1! White can simply ignore the hanging piece, because after gxf3 gxf3 he gets an enormous attack on the kingside. 20...gxf3 21.gxf3 ♘g5 22.♔a2! The a1 rook joins the attack. An illustrative line to finish the game is 22...♖e8 23.♖ag1 ♔f8



24.♖xg5! White had other wins too, but this is the prettiest one. 24...♕xg5 25.♖h8+ ♔e7 26.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 27.c7+! ♔f8

28.♕c6! winning the a8 rook and the game as 28...♖a7 loses to 29.♕e8+ ♔g7 30.♕xc8+– and the c-pawn promotes soon.

19.♔b1

Only one move is left to connect the rooks.

19...♖e8

19...g4 is met the same way as before: 20.hxg4 hxg4 21.♔a2+–;

19...♗xd4 20.exd4 (The endgame after *20.♘xd4 ♕xf2 21.♕xf2 ♘xf2 22.♖c1*± is also very promising. White advances his c-pawn next and he can activate his a1-rook along the 3rd rank.) 20...♗f5 21.♗d3+– followed by ♘e5 with a healthy extra pawn and a better position for White.

20.♔a2 ♖a7

Black has basically lost the battle. He is a pawn down and left without any counterplay. White brings both of his rooks into the game.

21.♖ad1 ♔f8

Black has no useful move... Perhaps Topalov wanted to get his king away from the kingside in order to sometimes threaten to play ...g4, but White parried this idea forever with his next move.

22.♖hf1

Protecting the f2-pawn in order to free the f3 knight.

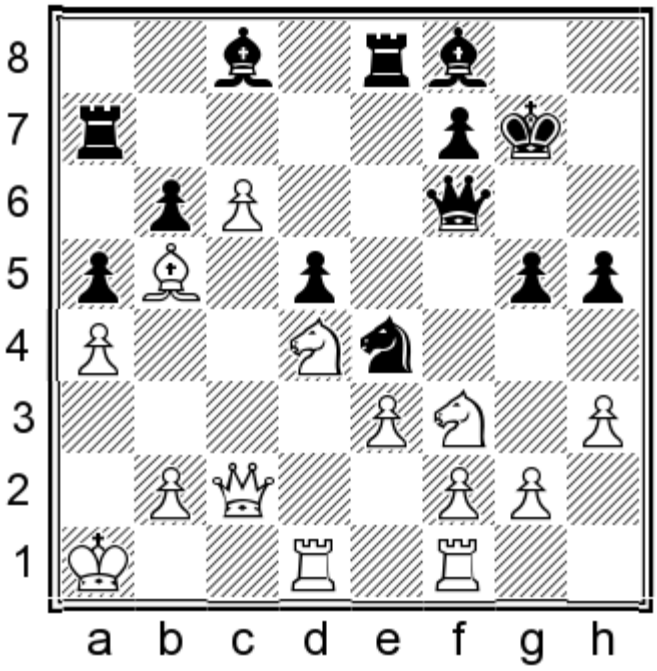
22...♔g7

22...g4 already makes no sense as the f2 pawn is not hanging. 23.hxg4 hxg4 24.♘g1+– followed by ♘e2-f4.

23.♔a1!?

White has no need to hurry. Andreikin hides his king on the safest square on the board. He already prepares for the forthcoming plan of winning the d5 pawn and exits from the ...♗e6 pin just in case.

23...♗f8



24.♘e2!

All thewhite pieces are improved to the maximum, and it is time to deliver the final blow!

24...♖d8 25.h4!

Gaining the f4-square for the knight.

25...g4 26.♘f4!

This double threat on h5 and d5 finishes the game.

26...♔g8 27.♘xd5

Black resigned in view of 27.♘xd5 ♕f5 28.♕xe4 (*28.♘xb6+–* is equally good.; *28.♘d4 ♕xd5 29.♘b3+–* also wins on the spot.) 28...♕xe4 29.♘f6+ ♔g7 30.♘xe4 ♖xd1+ 31.♖xd1 gxf3 32.gxf3 ♗e7 33.♘d6+– with a decisive material advantage. The cold-blooded king maneuver brought White the full point. It worked extremely well in this game, but we don't recommend trying this in your own games, or perhaps only in some exceptional cases!

1–0

GAME 30
S. Mamedyarov (2757)
L. Aronian (2830)
Khanty-Mansiysk RUS
Khanty-Mansiysk RUS (9.3)
23.03.2014, [E20]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

At this moment in the tournament Aronian was sharing the lead with Anand, but he had to press in each game to win the

tournament regardless of the color he played. Mamedyarov was ready for the complications and an amazing game ensued...

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.f3

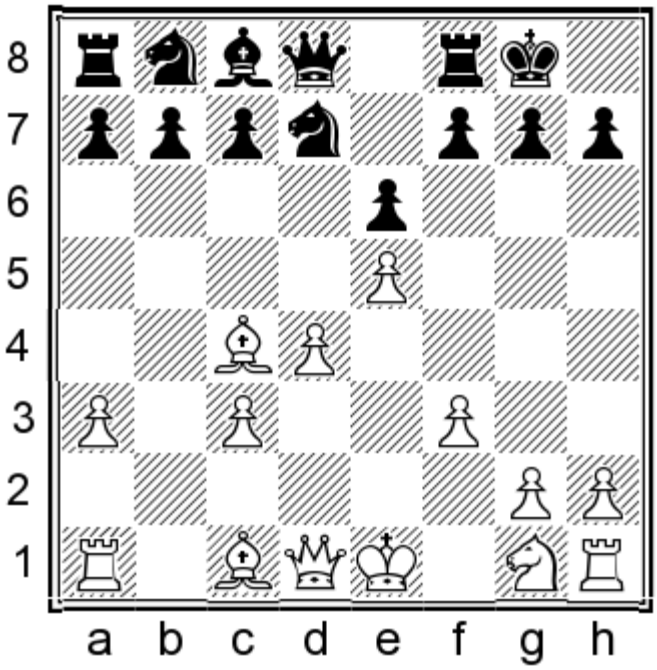
The Nimzo-Indian with 4.f3 is a guarantee of a sharp struggle! It did not take Aronian as a surprise and he blitzed out the following rare, but very interesting moves...

4...0-0

4...d5 or 4...c5 are considered to be the main lines nowadays.

5.e4 d5 6.e5 ♘fd7 7.cxd5

A nice opening trap occurs after 7.a3?! ♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 dxc4 9.♗xc4? otherwise ...♘b6 saves the pawn, but now a pretty tactical idea wins material using the misplacement of the f3 pawn.



9...♘xe5! 10.dxe5 ♕h4+ and the bishop is lost.

7...exd5 8.a3

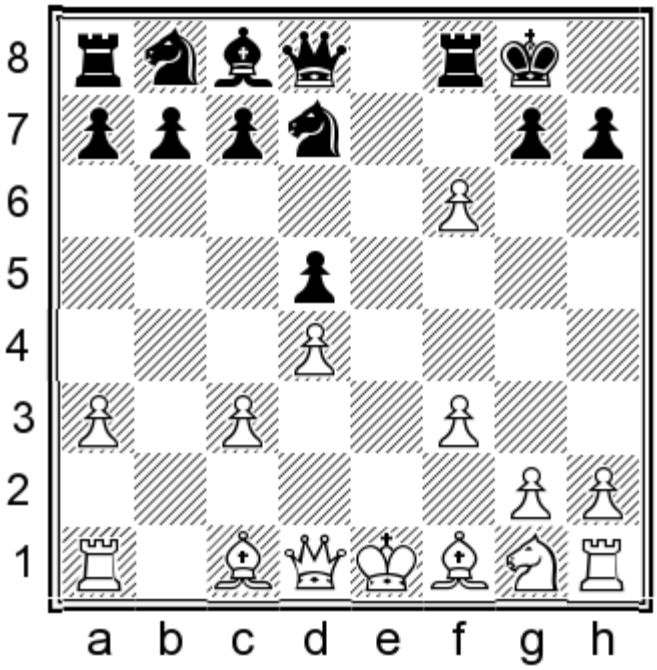
A principled move is 8.f4 with the idea of obtaining the ideal development of the pieces after ♘f3 and ♗d3, but Black quickly uses his lead in the development and opens the center with 8...c5!

8...♗xc3+ 9.bxc3 f6!

Black has to undermine the center, otherwise he ends up in a bad position with a huge space disadvantage.

10.exf6

A sad necessity.



There is no time to hold the structure together with 10.f4? because of the tactical strike 10...fxe5 11.dxe5 ♘xe5! 12.fxe5 ♕h4+ and White collapses, as after 13.♔d2 ♕f4+–+ the f1-bishop falls.

10...♕e8+!?

This is basically the novelty of the game. The position remains unclear, but objectively I believe Black is fine! I am quite sure that this line is going to be tested more frequently from now on. The move is intended to disturb the development of the white pieces. 10...♕xf6 was mainly played before, but now White could finish his development with 11.♗d3 and ♘e2 next.

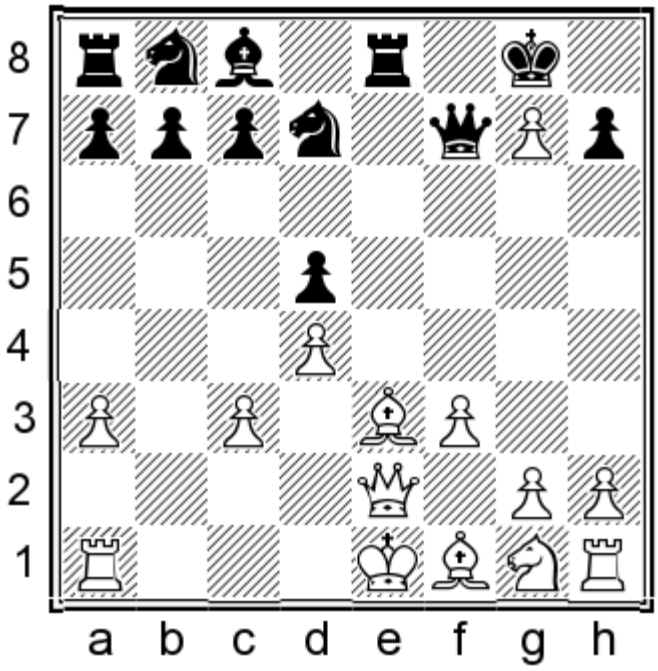
11.♕e2

In case of ♗e2 or ♘e2, Black simply recaptures with ...♘xf6 and White faces difficulties with finishing development. Now the queen is misplaced (she prevents the ♗d3, ♘e2 plan) but at least White wins some material. 11.♔f2 runs into 11...♘xf6 with the threats of unpleasant checks on e4 and g4.

11...♕f7!

White would have been happy to play the endgame with the bishop pair, but of course Aronian had a different idea in mind.

12.fxg7 ♖e8 13.♗e3



13...♘c6!

Aronian was still blitzing out his moves. Quite an unpleasant feeling, but Mamedyarov has managed to come up with the best reaction. Many players would have quickly collapsed with such a pin on the e-file and the threat of ...♘a5-c4!

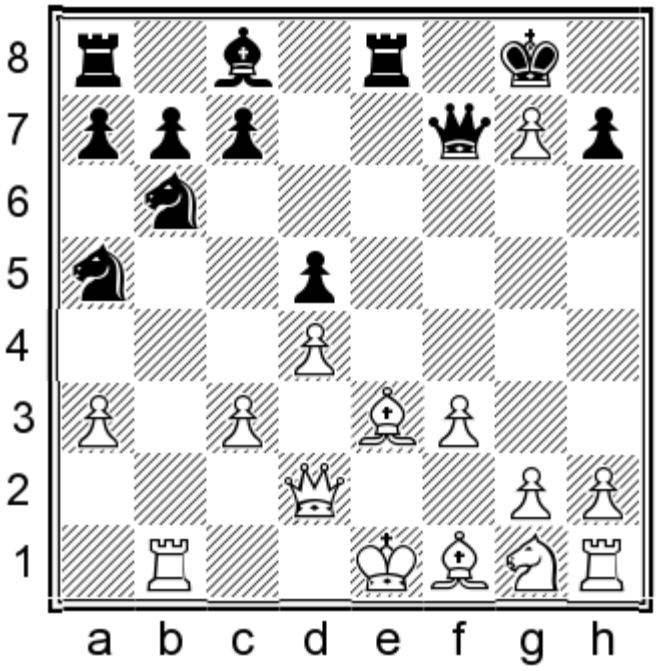
14.♕d2!

Evacuating the first piece from the pin. It seemingly moves into the ...♘c4 motif, but White had a clever exchange sacrifice in mind... The idea to close the e-file with 14.f4, planning ♘f3-e5, fails to 14...♘f6! 15.♘f3 ♗g4!∓ and White does not succeed in getting his knight to e5, which means he ends up in trouble. 14.♔f2 would also have been met by 14...♘f6! again with the threats of ♘g4 and ♘e4.

14...♘a5!

♘b3 is threatened and the other knight is ready to go to b6 and from there to c4.

15.♖b1! ♘b6



16.♖b4!

There was no other way for White to continue the game. Mamedyarov wants to sacrifice the exchange and afterwards he will finally be able to finish his development. He will have a small material disadvantage, but he might hope for adequate compensation against the exposed black king.

16...♘ac4 17.♗xc4 dxc4

This seems like Black's first inaccuracy. Aronian wants to settle his knight on d5, so White is forced to continue his exchange sacrificing policy. 17...♘xc4! seems to be stronger. 18.♖xc4 dxc4 19.♔f2 ♗f5 20.♘e2 ♗d3 21.♘f4 ♖e7! 22.♖e1 ♖ae8 23.♘xd3 cxd3 24.♕xd3 This line was more-or-less forced from White's point of view and materially he is already doing fine. However the pin on the e-file seems to give Black an edge as White is lacking any dynamic play. 24...♕b3! followed by ...b5-a5-b4 seems to be very strong. It is difficult to suggest an idea for White and otherwise Black is just better.

18.♖b5!

The desperado rook continues its journey and White is now ready to sacrifice it on d5! A mutual inaccuracy is coming in the next pair of moves...

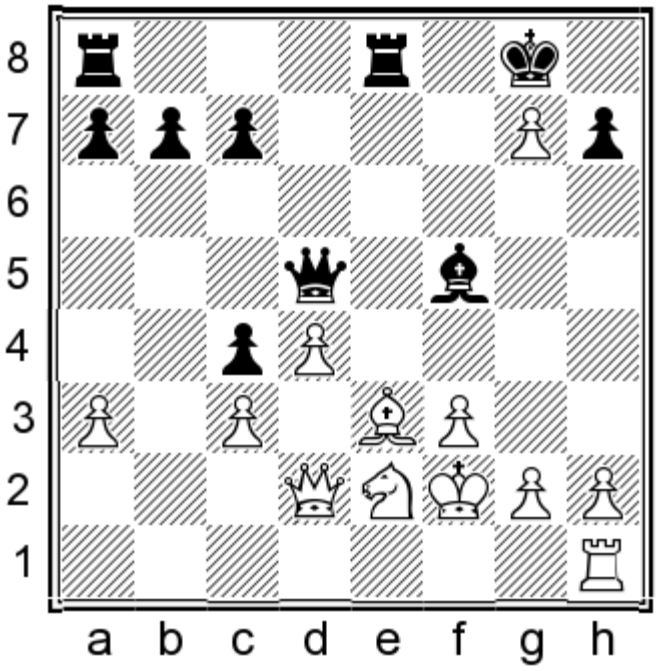
18...♗f5

18...♘d5 was more forcing. 19.♖xd5 ♕xd5 20.♘e2 ♗f5 21.♔f2 and we transpose to the game.

19.♔f2

19.♖e5!? White could have finally solved the problems on the e-file without giving up material to do so. ♘e2 appears next and White is suddenly doing fine.

19...♘d5 20.♖xd5 ♕xd5 21.♘e2



We have reached the next critical position. In comparison to the 17...♘xc4 line, the queen on d5 stands in the firing-line of the ♘f4 tempo. Objectively Black should still be fine, but from a practical point of view it is already easier to play the position with White. His plans suggest themselves, while Black must always choose between several options and it is very difficult to give a preference to just one of them.

21...a5

It is a very logical plan to create counterplay on the queenside with ...b5-b4, but after all is said and done, it turns out to be a mistake. Now on 21...♖e7 22.♗g5 is unpleasant, because ...♖e6 runs into ♘f4, while to take the g7-pawn is not an advisable idea, because it plays an important defensive role from Black's point of view. That could be met by ♗f6! I believe the best was 21...♖ad8! 22.h4 ♖d7 trying to double the rooks. The position is very unclear and all results are possible.

22.h4!

White would like to defend his g7-pawn with h5-h6. Capturing it always allows plans like ♗f4-e5 followed by ♕g5, with a very dangerous attack.

22...b5

22...♖a6 was another idea behind ...a5, but White could continue his initial plan with 23.h5 because ...♖ae6 runs into ♘f4!

23.h5 b4

The consequent continuation of a wrong plan! Black sacrifices a pawn, but he can finally activate his rook along the a-file.

24.cxb4 axb4 25.axb4 ♕b5

Aronian was annoyed by the ...♖a3 ♘c3 idea and he prepares to take the b4 pawn in this case. However from this moment on, Mamedyarov seizes the initiative with each move! 25...♖a3 runs into 26.♘c3! and somehow the only

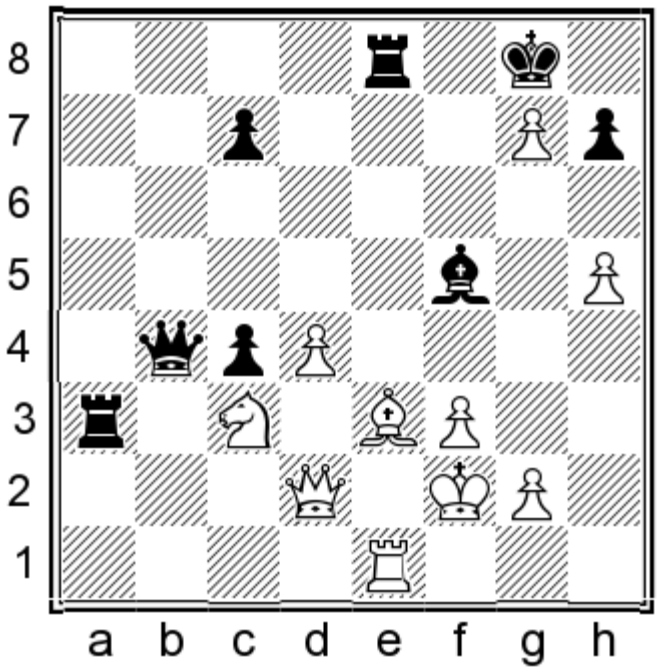
logical place for the queen was on d6, but then ♘b5 works. After other moves, like 26...♕f7 27.h6 White is doing very well. 25...♗d3! would have been the only chance, as now on ♘c3 ♕d6 is possible and b4 is under attack. 26.♘f4 ♕d6 27.h6 ♖a3 with mutual chances, but I already prefer White, as if he could land a check it would be decisive.

26.♖e1

A good prophylactic move against ...♖a3.

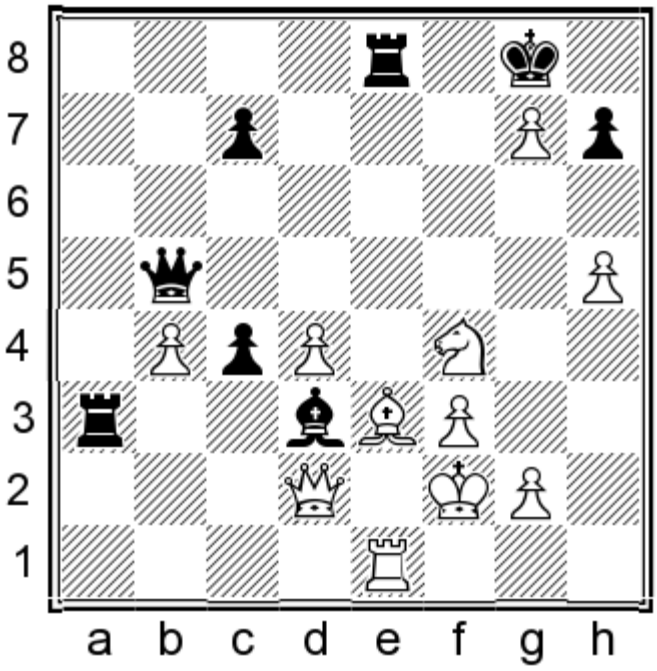
26...♗d3

The initial idea of the previous ...♕b5 — to play 26...♖a3 — is refuted tactically by 27.♘c3 ♕xb4



28.♗h6! Using the power of the g7-pawn, White is threatening deadly checks on the back rank. 28...♖b8 (*28...♖xe1 29.♕xe1 ♗d7 30.♘d5! ♕xe1+ 31.♔xe1+–* ♘e7 or ♘f6 wins.) 29.♕e3!+– is over. Black cannot parry the ♕e8 threat!

27.♘f4 ♖a3



28.d5!

Very well played! One check could be decisive, but for this White needs to open the e-file. He is ready to play ♗d4 or ♗c5.

28...♗b1!?

A nice resource from Black, but it does not help. He creates the threat of ...♖a2 and also prepares to push ...c3 as the d3 is not hanging anymore. The bishop should not be taken because of ♖ae3. 28...♖ea8 could lead to something similar to the game. 29.♔g3! preventing ...♖a2. 29...♖a2 30.♕c3+– and Black is in trouble.

29.♔g3!

As simple as that! White escapes from the ...♖a2 threat and he refreshes his ideas of ♗d4 or ♗c5.

29...c3 30.♕c1!

A double attack. The bishop and the rook can only be saved with ...♖b3, but this lures away a defender from the 8th rank. Black can no longer think about ♖aa8...

30...♖b3 31.♗c5 ♖xe1

31...c2 is met by 32.h6+– with the idea of ♘h5-f6!

32.♕xe1 ♕d7

White can choose between different wins here, but Mamedyarov continues with the most human moves.

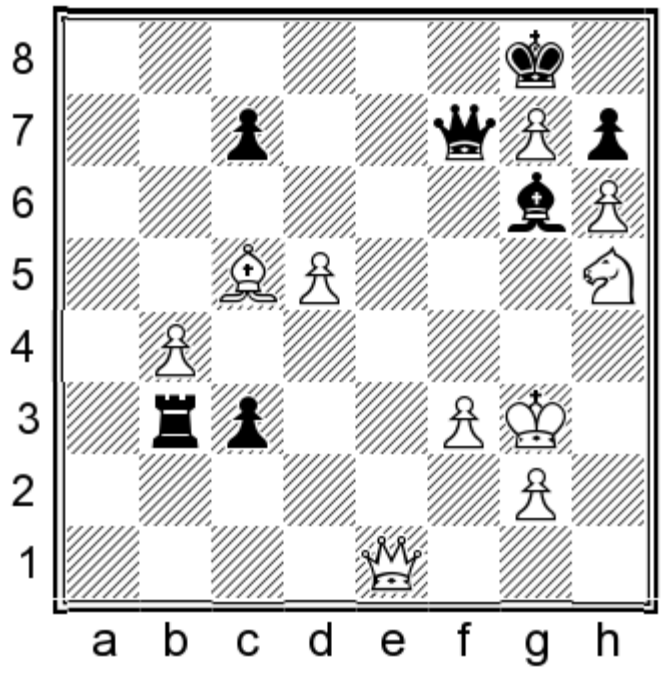
33.h6 ♕f7 34.♘h5!

The machine suggests the even stronger 34.♕e5! with the idea of ♘h5-f6. 34...♗f5 35.♘h5!! ♕xh5 36.♕e7! ♕g6+ 37.♔f2 ♖b2+ 38.♔e3 ♕xh6+ 39.f4 and mate is inevitable, but of course only a computer would play like this.

39...♕xg7 40.♕e8++–

34...♗g6

Allowing a beautiful combination to finish the game, but it was over anyway.



34...♕xh5 35.♕e6+ ♕f7 36.♕c8++–;

34...♕g6+ 35.♔h4+– Black runs out of checks.

35.♕e8+!! ♕xe8 36.♘f6+ ♔f7 37.♘xe8

White is ready to jump back to f6 with his knight.

37...♖a3

The only way to stop White from queening, but this leads to a hopeless bishop endgame... 37...c2 leads to a forced mate after 38.♘f6! c1=♕ 39.g8=♕+ ♔xf6 40.♕e6+ ♔g5 41.♕g4+ ♔f6 42.♗d4+ ♔f7 (*42...♔e7 43.♕e6+ ♔d8 44.♗f6#*) 43.♕e6+ ♔f8 44.♗g7#

38.♘f6 ♖a8 39.g8=♕+ ♖xg8 40.♘xg8 ♔xg8 41.♔f4

White is two pawns up. The technical part of realizing the advantage is quite easy: White can create passed pawns on both sides, which is the key to opposite-colored bishop endgames....

41...♗d3 42.♔e5 ♔f7 43.♗e3 ♗f1 44.g4

Black resigned in view of 44.g4 ♗e2 45.d6! cxd6+ 46.♔xd6 ♗xf3 47.g5 ♗e2 48.♔c5 and White simply promotes the b-pawn with the help of the king. The black king cannot go in that direction because it always allows the breakthrough of g6 hxg6 h7! The bishop stands very well on e3, because it protects the g5-h6 pawns and neutralizes the c3 pawn. A great game and a fantastic win for Mamedyarov. But from the opening point of view Black could have gained an edge had he played 17...♘xc4.

1–0

GAME 31
S. Grishchenko (2436)
B. Jobava (2706)
21st TCh-RUS 2014 Loo RUS (7.1)
13.04.2014, [A52]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Lately Jobava has played a lot of exciting games and we commented on quite a few of them over recent weeks. It seems like Grischenko sort of caught Jobava out in preparation and missed good opportunities to get an advantage. The position still remained very sharp and somehow from the game we could tell that Jobava was avoiding a draw, adecision which ended up badly for him.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5

Not so long ago Jobava won a nice game against Wojtaszek in Wijk aan Zee with this “risky” opening.

3.dxe5 ♘g4 4.♗f4

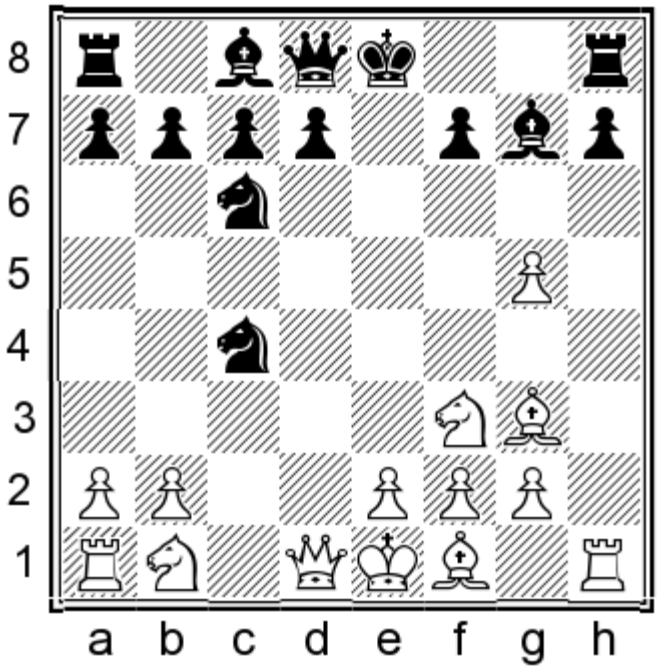
This is clearly the main line. After the more solid 4.♘f3 ♗c5 5.e3 ♘c6 6.♘c3 0-0 7.♗e2 ♘gxe5 Black’s position seems to be fine to me, for example look at the game Gelfand-Rapport.

4...g5 5.♗g3 ♗g7 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.h4!

Still theory, but it is clear that Grischenko is going for the refutation of the line.

7...♘gxe5 8.hxg5 ♘xc4

What a crazy position already on move 8. Clearly Black is doing very badly positionally, but the white pawn on b2 is hanging, and will probably be lost, so White needs to be quick with his actions.



9.♘c3

A good move. White is going for a crush of Black's position.

9...♘xb2

Jobava accepts the challenge, but I think it just looks very dangerous. Maybe Black could have played 9...d6 10.e3 ♗e6 when White's position looks better but things are still very unbalanced.

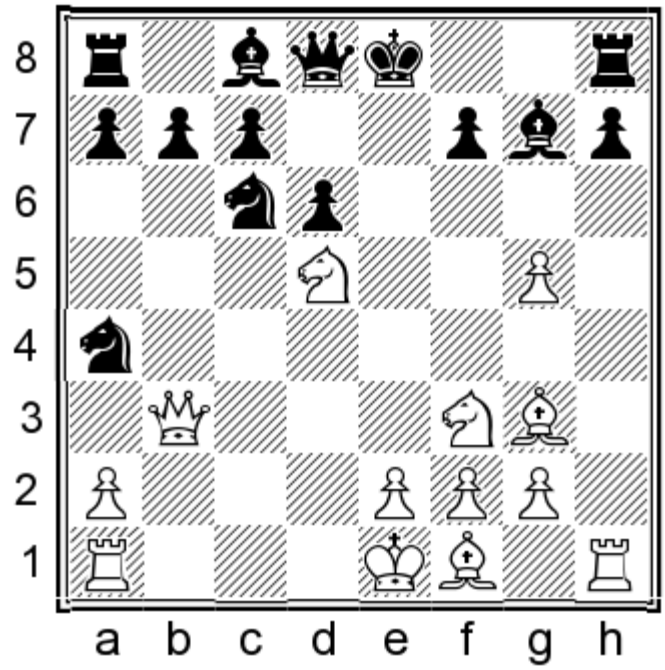
10.♕b3

Another very interesting option for White seems to be 10.♕c2!? ♘a4 Black doesn't have anything better. 11.♘b5 d6 and now comes 12.0-0-0! with a very dangerous attack.

10...♘a4 11.♘d5

Right now the same idea of long-castling is not as strong as before. 11.♘b5 d6 12.0-0-0 ♘c5 The white queen on b3 is under attack and the position is highly unclear.

11...d6



12.g6!?

Wow! What a move by White! Of course White could have played 12.♖d1 with the idea of playing ♘f4-♘h5 but I think with playing 10.♕b3 White already had the 12.g6!? move in mind

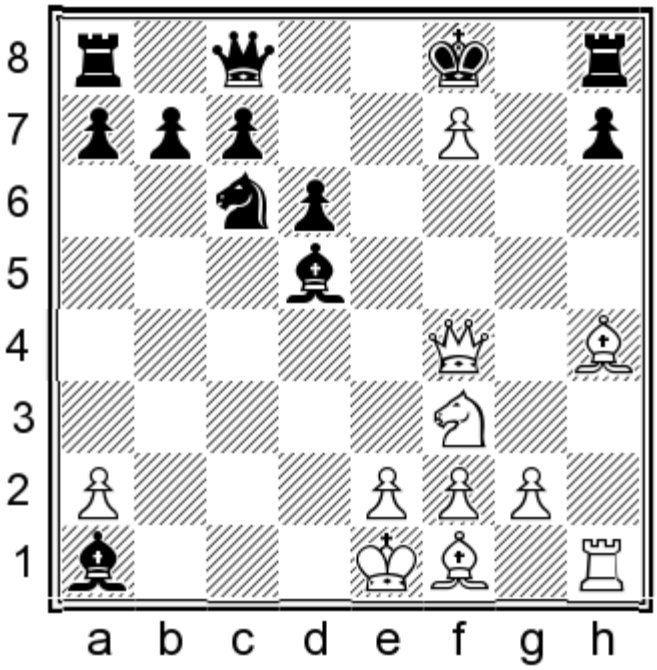
12...♗e6!

This seems to be the only move for Black. After the greedy 12...♗xa1 White has the winning idea of playing 13.♗h4! when Black cannot hold on to his queen... 13...hxg6 14.♗xd8 ♖xh1 15.♗g5 and White's position looks winning.

13.♗h4

Maybe not the best move for White. 13.gxf7+!? looks quite interesting. 13...♔f8 is one of the lines, but of course

Black also has many other options... 14.♗h4 ♕c8 15.♕xa4! The beginning of a very nice plan... 15...♗xa1 16.♕f4! Another great move, as initially it is even hard to see what White's idea might be... 16...♗xd5



17.♗f6!! What a fantastic move! 17...♗xf6 18.♕xf6 Black can't save his rook on h8 so White should be better here.

13...♕d7?!

Not a mistake, but probably not the best move either. Black should have played 13...♗xd5! 14.♕xd5 ♗c3+! An important moment. White needs to decide whether to put his King on d1 or to play ♘d2. 15.♘d2 (*15.♔d1 hxg6!* A difficult move to find, but Black seems to be doing perfectly fine afterwards. *16.♕e4+ ♗e5 17.♕xa4 ♗xa1 18.♗xd8* ♖*xh1* The position of course remains very crazy, but I think only White can be risking anything here.) 15...♕d7 16.gxf7+ ♕xf7 17.♕e4+ ♔d7 Black's chances also look better to me here, but of course in such a position any result is possible.

14.♗f6!

A great tactical trick!

14...fxg6

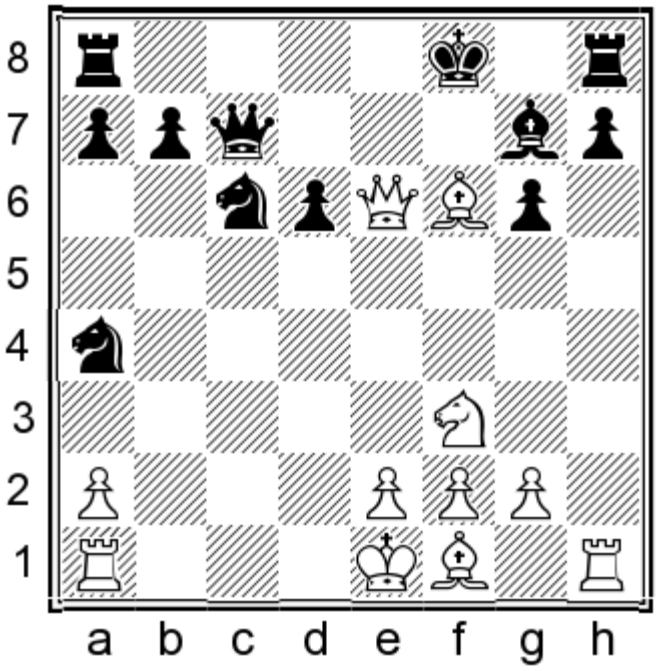
After 14...♗xd5? 15.♕e3+ White is just winning.

15.♘xc7+

This was the idea behind 14.♗f6!.

15...♕xc7 16.♕xe6+ ♔f8

Let us take a fresh look at the position. Both kings' positions are open and things look very confusing. Black is a pawn up but it does not matter much here. It is White to play and it is clear that every tempo is very important. The game remains extremely unclear.



17.♖d1

White brings his rook to the center and also defends against ...♕a5 check with ♖d2.

17...♘b4

Jobava continues to go for the most unclear lines. After the more solid 17...♘c5 18.♕xd6+ ♕xd6 19.♖xd6 ♗xf6 20.♖xf6+ ♔e7 21.♖f4 this resulting endgame looks pretty equal to me.

18.♖h4

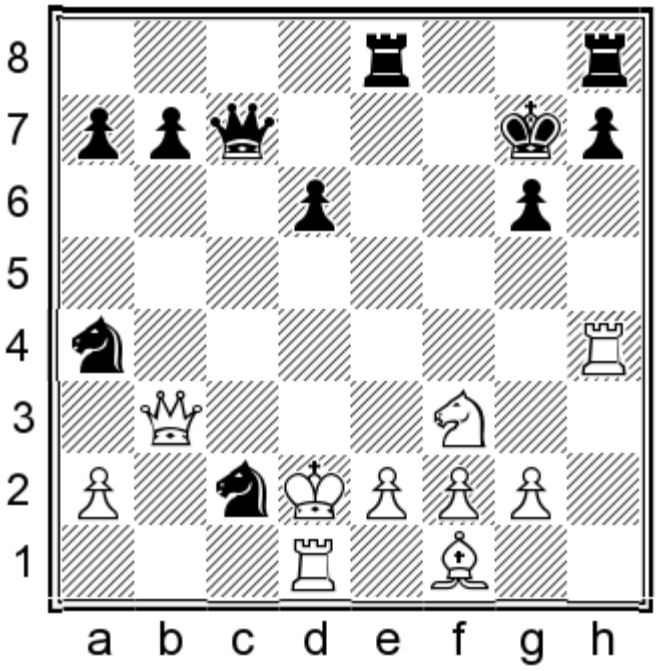
White brings his rook into the defence over the 4th rank and at the same time threatens the black king with ♖f4 ideas.

18...♘c2+ 19.♔d2 ♖e8

A very human move, but Black misses a fantastic move... 19...♘d4!! Chess can be beautiful sometimes! 20.♗xd4 The only move to avoid ♕c3 mate. 20...♗xd4 21.e3 and of course once again Black was threatening to play ♕c3. 21...♘c5 The position remains crazy but I think that Black's chances should be preferable .

20.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 21.♕b3

Suddenly the knight on c2 has no escape squares.



21...♕a5+!

The best move. Black can't save the c2 knight anyway, so Jobava tries his chances in the attack.

22.♔xc2 ♖c8+ 23.♔b1 ♘c3+

It is still hard to say who is better, but I feel it should somehow be White. The rook on h4 stands very strongly, defending the white king, and at the same time it can be dangerous to the black one.

24.♔b2 ♘xd1+ 25.♕xd1 ♕b6+

Black is going for the f2 pawn.

26.♔a1?!

White should not have given up on the f2 pawn that easily. 26.♕b3!? ♕c5 27.♔a1 with the idea of playing ♕b2 check. The position remains very unclear.

26...♕xf2

Now Black already has 2 pawns for the rook vs knight+bishop, and the pawns g2-e2-a2 can also be weak in the endgame. Black has finally taken over the game.

27.♖b4 ♖c7

This move probably gives White a chance to escape. 27...♕e3! looks stronger. 28.♖xb7+ ♔h6 The black king feels very comfortable on h6 while his white colleague is going to be under a heavy attack. Black is clearly better here.

28.♕xd6!

Grischenko takes his chance.

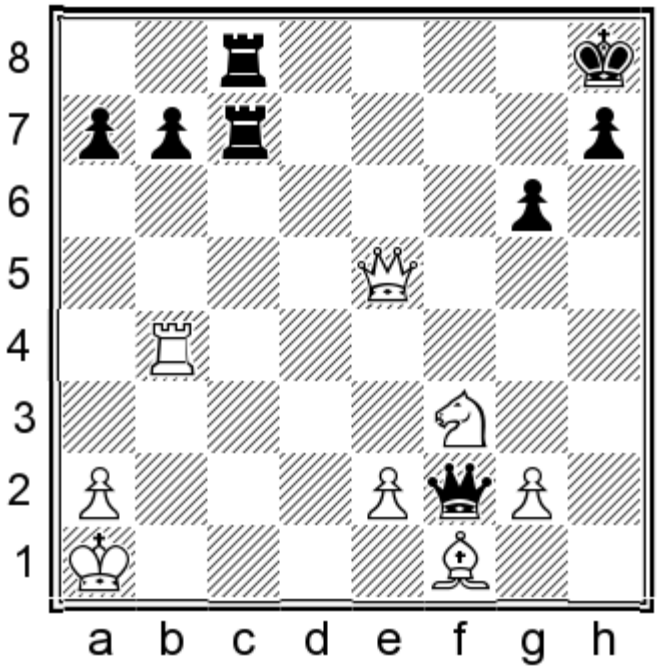
28...♖hc8

28...♕xf1+ just leads to a perpetual: 29.♖b1 ♖c1 30.♕e7+ ♔g8 31.♕e8+ ♔g7 32.♕e7+

29.♕e5+

White starts to check the black king.

29...♔g8 30.♕e6+ ♔h8 31.♕e5+



31...♖g7

What a will-to-win from Jobava! But right here it looks a bit stupid as White's position is just much better and Black can at most hope for an escape... Of course after 31...♔g8 32.♕e6+ the game would end in a draw.

32.♖b1

The white queen controls the whole board from e5 and the black rooks are unco-ordinated, which means that White has enough time to finally finish his development.

32...h6 33.♘d4?!

It seems like both players had some time-trouble issues. After the simple 33.e3 ♖c2 34.♕e6 Black would face huge problems.

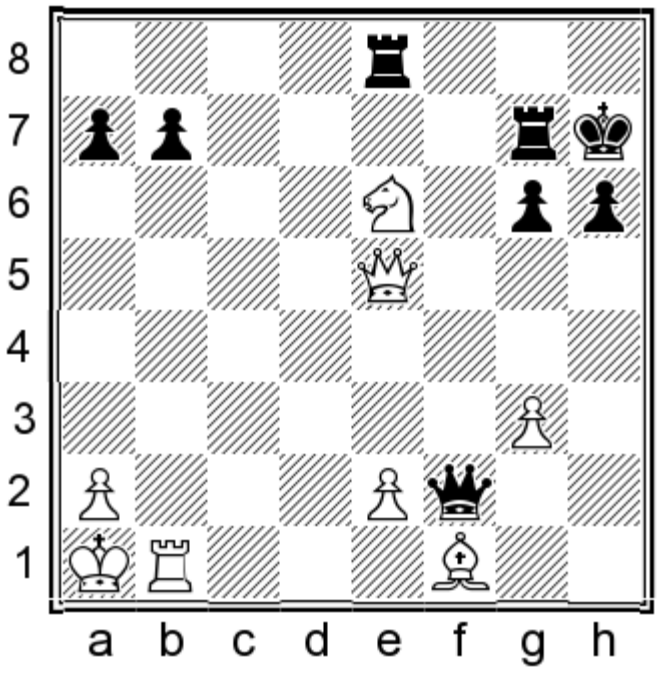
33...♔h7 34.g3

The white bishop is finally coming out from f1.

34...♖e8!

A strong move. Black is back.

35.♘e6



35...♖f7

Once again Jobava avoids the draw! Black could have forced a draw with the simple 35...♖xe6 36.♕xe6 ♕d4+ 37.♖b2 ♕d1+

36.♗h3

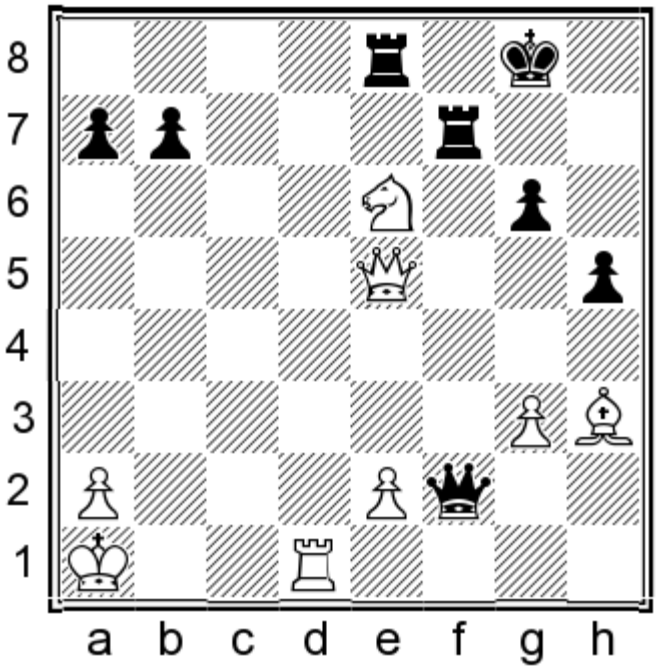
Now all the white pieces are in the game and Black's position is very dangerous.

36...♔g8 37.♖d1

37.♖f1 doesn't work as after 37...♕xf1+ 38.♗xf1 ♖xf1+ 39.♔b2 Black has the killing 39...♔f7! winning back the knight on e6.

37...h5?

And finally a blunder by Jobava decides the outcome of this crazy game...



After 37...♕f6 38.♕xf6 ♖xf6 39.♘f4 White's position is maybe a little better, but a draw should still be the logical outcome.

38.♖f1!

Now the g5 square is not protected by the pawn on h6.

38...♕xf1+ 39.♗xf1 ♖xf1+ 40.♔b2

and as Black doesn't have ♔f7, White is just winning.

40...♖f7 41.♕d5

Black can't avoid ♘g5 next. What an unpleasant end for Jobava after a crazy game — and twice avoiding a forced draw. But anyhow, it was a great and very exciting game to watch and learn from! :)

1–0

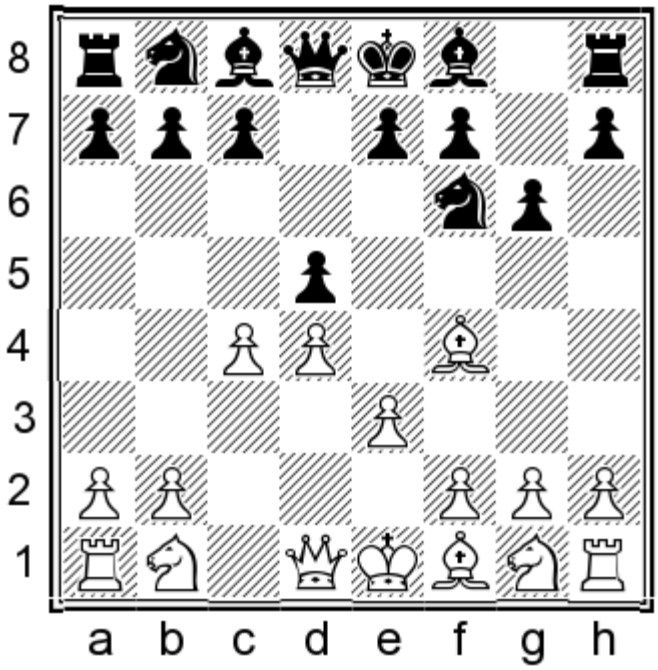
GAME 32
V. Fedoseev (2662)
V. Zvjaginsev (2642)
67th ch-RUS HL 2014
Vladivostok RUS (9.3)
13.06.2014, [D00]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

We are in the final round of the Russian Higher League, the tournament, where the first 5 players qualify to the Russian Superfinal, where they would join Kramnik, Grischuk, Karjakin and the other top players. The winner of this game had a guaranteed place there, but draw would not be enough for them. My good friend Vadim Zvjaginsev manages to win a brilliant tactical game. The game is full of unusual, but beautiful, tactical motifs.

1.d4 d5 2.♗f4

White tries to drive the game into less explored territories.

2...♘f6 3.e3 g6 4.c4



An ambitious move. Usually the players who quickly develop their bishop to f4 like to set up a very solid position with c3, but in this game White logically wanted to create complications. Now we reach a Gruenfeld-like position and both sides play in the spirit of this opening and use many typical tactical and positional ideas.

4...c5!?

In the spirit of the Gruenfeld -playing against the center. 4...♗g7 5.♘c3 would have transposed to a huge main-line of the Gruenfeld, but Zvjaginsev himself does not employ this opening, therefore he handles the opening with the typical moves but at the same time he avoids some theoretical discussions.

5.dxc5 ♘c6

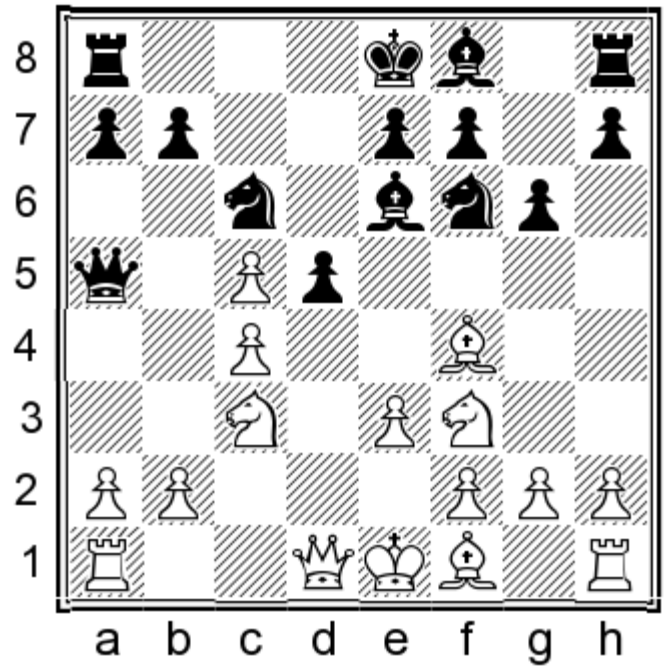
Zvjaginsev conseqently continues his idea to avoid transpositions. We have already reached a new position. However if Black had played 5...♗g7 6.♘c3 we have again transposed to a position with thousands of games...

6.♘f3 ♗e6

The most natural and objectively stronger move 6...♗g7! would have been a transposition again after 7.♘c3

7.♘c3 ♕a5

The most consequent move again, but White can make use of the fact that the bishop has not yet developed to g7, and the pressure on c3 is therefore not so great at the moment.



7...dxc4 was dubious in view of 8.♘g5! and White wins the c4-pawn.

8.♕b3!

White attacks the b7-pawn and suddenly it is not so easy to deal with this simple threat. Black has no adequate way to protect it, some passive move like ...♘d8 obviously does not come into consideration, and neither does the trade of the queens with ...♕b4 because White is a pawn up. Black is basically forced into the following intuitive sacrifice.

8...♗g7! 9.♕xb7 0-0!

He who says A must also say B! A piece does not count now: Black must focus on the e1-king, which still needs two tempi to castle kingside and Black should find his counterplay on the c3 square. ...♘e4 is a very dangerous threat.

10.♕xc6?!

Too greedy! 10.♕b5! White should have been satisfied with two extra pawns and offered the trade of queens. White would have had the advantage in this case, but who could refrain from a “free” piece on c6...

10...♘e4!

We have reached the dream scenario for all Gruenfeld players. Such a dynamic position!

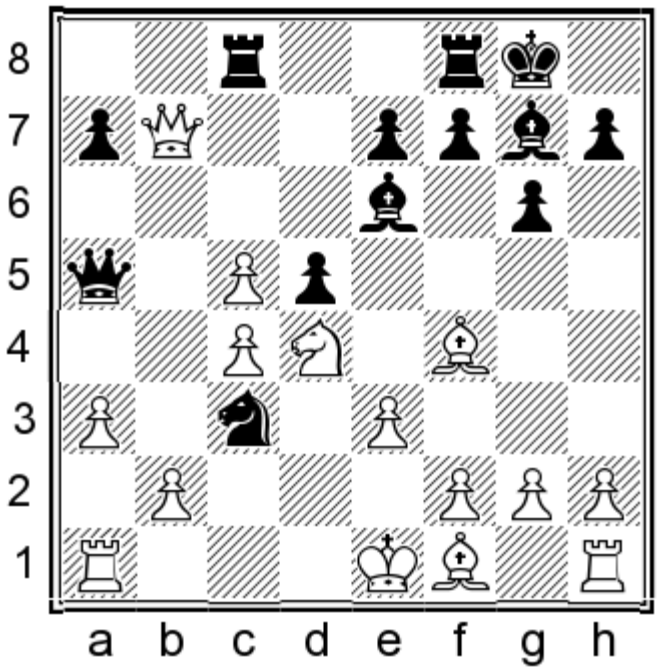
11.♘d4

White tries to close down the bishop and prevents the main ...♗xc3 threat. On 11.♘d2 ♘xd2 12.♔xd2 dxc4 is very unpleasant. All the diagonals and files are opened onto the exposed king. White has nothing better than 13.♔e2 ♕b4 14.♕b5 but then Black wins back the material and gets a good position after 14...♗xc3 15.♕xb4 ♗xb4

11...♘xc3 12.a3!

A very nice resource also from White! Black was threatening different discovered checks with the knight, but all of them could be met by b4! Only one check prevents it, but first Black activates one of his rooks.

12...♖ac8 13.♕b7



13...♘a2+!!

What an amazing move, which forces the king to run! 13...♘e4+ 14.b4 ♕a4 15.♕b5+– forces the trade of the queens and White wins., or 13...dxc4 14.♕b4 ♕xb4 15.axb4+– also with a winning advantage.

14.♔d1

14.b4 could now be met by 14...♕xa3! this is the point of the unexpected ...♘a2 move, to close off the rook on a1!

14...♕a4+ 15.♔e1

15.♕b3 White would obviously like to trade queens with such a vulnerable king, but it did not work tactically in view of 15...♕xb3+ 16.♘xb3 dxc4 17.♘d4 ♖fd8! The dynamic plays continues even without the queens on board. 18.♖xa2 c3 19.♖a1 ♗xd4 20.exd4 ♖xd4+ 21.♔c2 cxb2 22.♔xb2 ♖xf4–+ Black soon ends up with material advantage.

15...♕a5+

Unfortunately Black is forced to repeat moves. 15...dxc4 might look tempting at first sight, but Black does not have enough compensation after 16.♖xa2! ♗xd4 (*16...c3 17.b3*) 17.exd4 c3 18.♖a1 ♕xd4 19.♕b4!+– and White covers everything.

16.♔e2?!

Objectively a mistake after which Black is better, but it was impossible to foresee the outcome of the complications.. White should have agreed to the repetition with 16.♔d1, but the tournament situation also forced White to continue this exciting fight.

16...♕xc5!

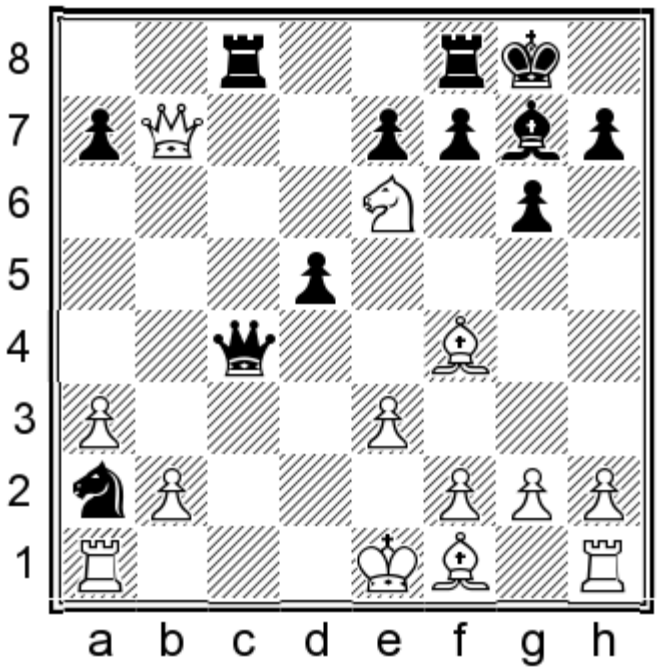
Grabbing some material and indirectly protecting the a2 knight.

17.♘xe6

17.♖xa2? ♕xc4+ 18.♔f3 ♕xa2–+

17...fxe6

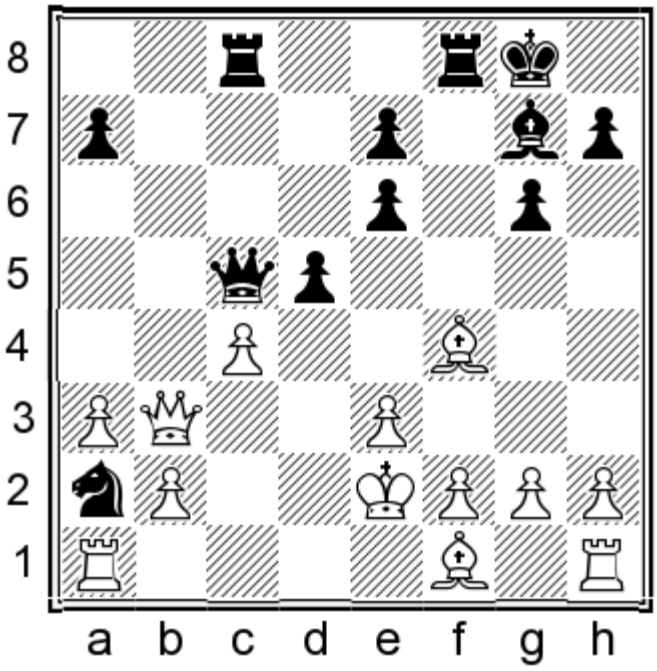
17...♕xc4+ was also strong, but Zvjaginsev did not want to send the king to the kingside, preferring to keep it in the center... 18.♔f3 (On *18.♔e1* Black wins with the pretty blow



18...♗c3+! 19.bxc3 ♕xc3+ 20.♔e2 ♕xa1 21.♘xf8 White is still ahead materially, but there is a forced mate... *21...♘c3+! 22.♔f3 ♕d1+! 23.♔g3 ♘e4+ 24.♔h3 ♕h5#*) 18...♕e4+ 19.♔g3 fxe6 with a promising position for Black!

18.♕b3

White tries to bring back the queen to the defense and would also finally like to take that knight on a2 off the board...

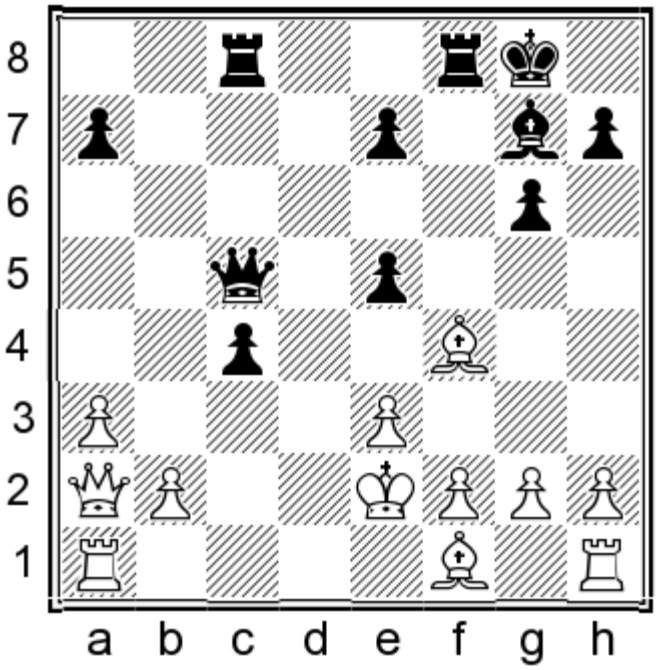


18...dxc4!

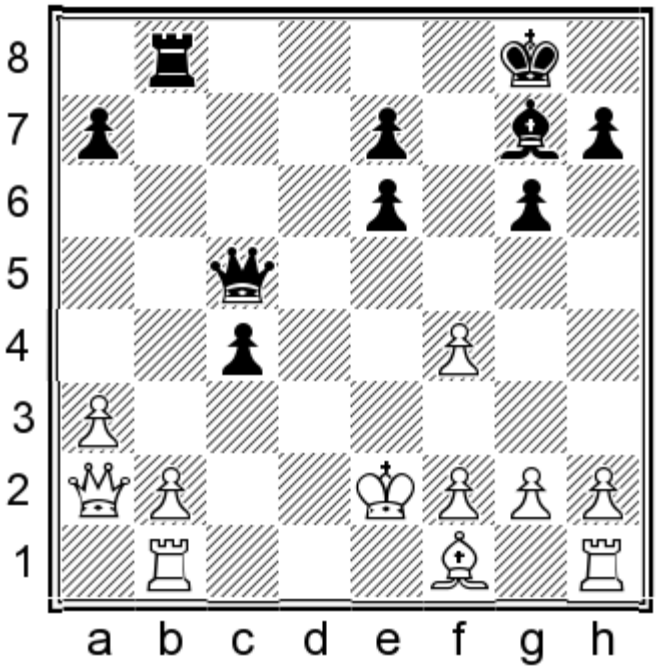
An excellent reaction! Black sacrifices a piece again, but he locks the white queen in the corner, which gives him more space to build up his attack against the king, which is still standing in the center.

19.♕xa2 e5!?

Zvjaginsev decides to advance his pawn to e4 to squeeze White even more and to avoid defenses like f3-♔f2.



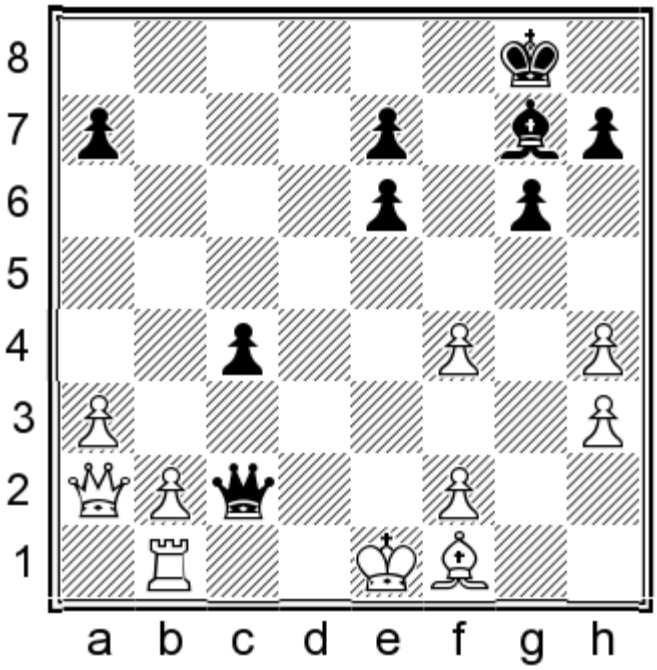
However Black had an even stronger move, which leads to a win in beautiful lines: 19...♖xf4!! Eliminating the defender of the b8 square. 20.exf4 ♖b8! 21.♖b1



21...♖b3!! This would have been just amazing! Black is a full rook down, but he has basically caged all the white pieces. Black is winning in all lines: 22.h4 a nice idea to bring in a defender and exchange an attacker with ♖h3, but it is too slow

(*22.*♔*e1* trying to free the bishop, but Black does not allow it *22...*♕*a5+! 23.*♔*d1* ♕*d5+ 24.*♔*e1* and the winning combination is: *24...*♗*c3+! 25.bxc3* ♕*e4+ 26.*♔*d2* ♖*xb1–+*)

22...♕f5 23.♖h3 ♕c2+ 24.♔e1 ♖xh3 25.gxh3



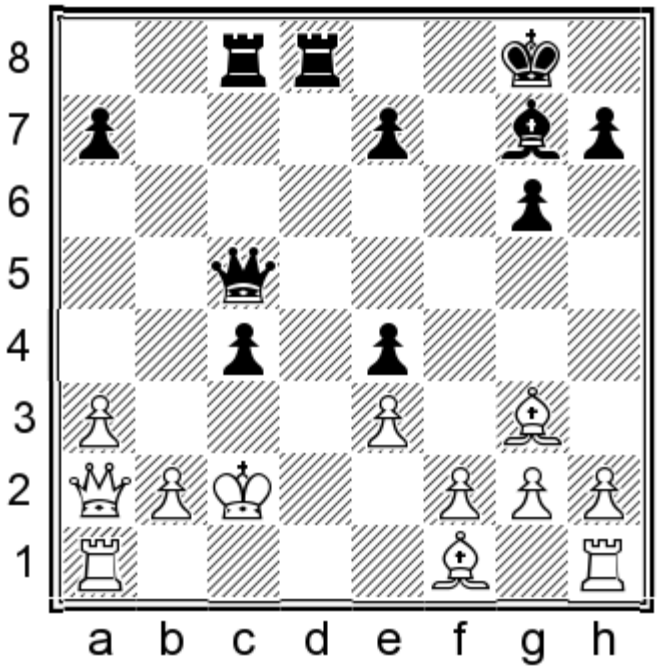
25...♗c3+! 26.bxc3 ♕xa2–+

20.♗g3 e4 21.♔d1

A desperate attempt to hide the king on the queenside, but it is easy to feel intuitively that it should not be successful.

However, to find its refutation requires enormous skill. Unfortunately for White 21.f3 trying to hide the king with ♔f2 and ♗e2 did not help in view of 21...exf3+ 22.gxf3 ♗h6! 23.f4 e5! is going to be crushing! Black opens all the lines on the king.

21...♖fd8+ 22.♔c2



22...♔f8!!

This is shocking! The idea itself is very nice and logical, Black would like to push ...c3 with a crushing attack and first he leaves the pin. But why does he move with his king to f8 rather than h8? Actually only ...♔f8 was winning and the reason could not be calculated, Zvjaginsev could only trust in his intuition. 22...♔h8 could have met by exactly the same moves as White was defending in the game 23.♖d1! ♖xd1 24.♔xd1 c3 it looks over, but it is actually not 25.b3! ♖d8+ (*25...c2+ 26.♔c1 ♕c3* seems to be over, but White saves himself with *27.♗c4! ♖d8 28.♕xc2!* and Black does not have more than perpetual check. *28...♕a1+ 29.♕b1*=) 26.♔c1 ♖d2 27.b4! completely unexpected with such attacking pieces, but White survives 27...♕h5 28.♕b3 ♖b2 29.♕a4!!+– And here is the difference! White is threatening ♕e8 mate! This is the reason why Black had to put his king on f8, to cover the back-rank mate! Amazing!

23.♖d1

There was no time for 23.♗e2 as 23...c3–+ is over. ...♖d2 or ...cxb2 is coming next.

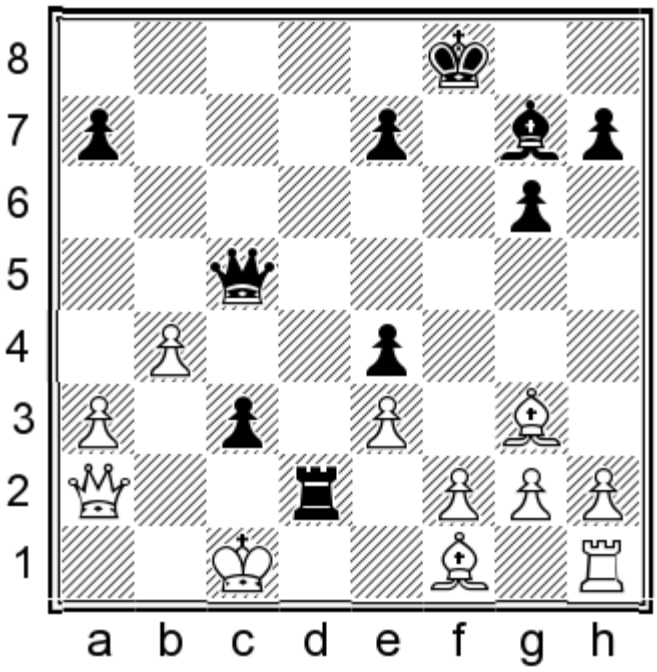
23...♖xd1 24.♔xd1 c3 25.b3!

Perfect defensive skills, but it does not help this time. White would like to close the c-file by developing the bishop to c4. 25.bxc3 ♕xc3–+ leads to mate soon. 25.b4 c2+ 26.♔c1 ♕c3

25...♖d8+!

Only this wins! 25...c2+ 26.♔c1 ♕c3 also looks very tempting, but it only leads to a draw after 27.♗c4! White is ready to take on c2. 27...♖d8 28.♕xc2 ♕a1+ 29.♕b1 ♕c3+ 30.♕c2=

26.♔c1 ♖d2 27.b4



27...♕h5!!

Zvjaginsev again finds the only way to win! The d1-square is the key to Black's attack.

28.♕b3 ♖b2! 29.♗c4

A kind of resignation, but there was nothing better. And in comparison to the 22...♔h8 line, on 29.♕a4 there is no threat on e8, so Black has time to play 29...♕d5!–+;

29.♕c4 leads to forced mate after the pretty 29...♖b1+! 30.♔xb1 ♕d1+ 31.♔a2 ♕c2+ 32.♔a1 ♕b2#;

29.♕d1 ♖b1+–+

29...♖xb3 30.♗xb3 ♕e2 31.♗c2 ♕a6!

The most precise move. Before going to c4, Black first weakens the b4-pawn.

32.a4 ♕c4 33.♖d1 ♔e8 34.♖e1 ♕a2

White resigned. What a game!!

0–1

GAME 33
P. Negi (2645)
R. Edouard (2679)
Politiken Cup 2014
Helsingor DEN (9.4)
28.07.2014, [C11]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We are now going to see a very fighting and interesting game. Early in the opening White tries a piece sacrifice, when it is actually very hard to say if he really has enough compensation for it. But...the French board 4 does not manage to find the best moves and quickly finds himself under a heavy attack which ends with a material win for White.

1.e4 e6

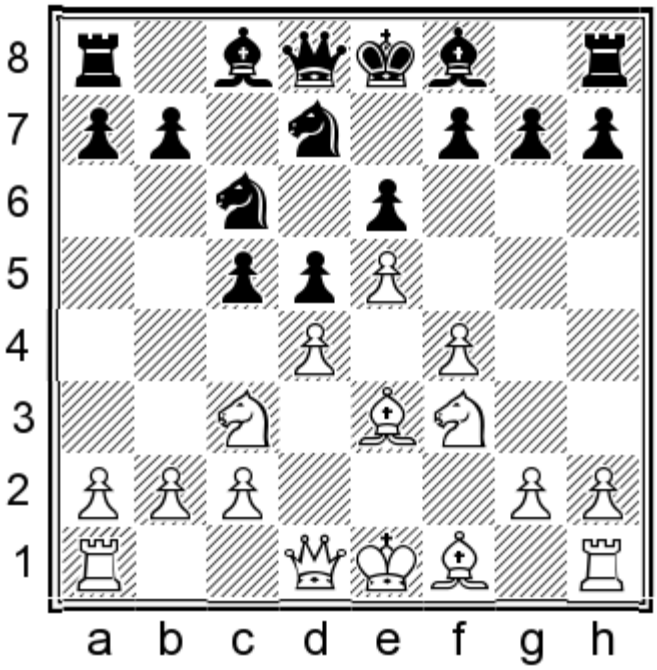
Over the years, the French Defence has found fewer-and-fewer fans at the top levels of the game.

2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5

The other main move for White is 4.♗g5 but now Black usually plays 4...dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♘bd7 One of the biggest experts in this line is Meier Georg.

4...♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3

From a logical point of view this line looks really dangerous for Black, as White has captured the center and the black bishop on c8 is badly placed. The only black advantages are his play against the d4 square and the very solid pawn structure.



7...♗e7

This is one of the main lines. The very forcing line starting with 7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♕b6 9.♕d2 ♕xb2 10.♖b1 is just extremely dangerous for Black as the latest games have shown. And the current main-line also seems to give White a clear advantage: 7...♕b6 8.♘a4 ♕a5+ 9.c3 c4 10.b4.

8.♕d2 0-0

Here White has a choice between different options. The main question is whether to castle kingside or queenside.

9.dxc5

Negi goes for the most aggressive continuation.

9...♘xc5 10.0-0-0 ♕c7

This is also a theoretical move, but I think this line looks really strange for Black. What is the black queen doing on c7?! To play f6 is never a threat and White is going to start a strong attack on the kingside very soon.

11.♔b1

A strong prophylactic move.

11...a6 12.♕e1

White transfers the queen to the kingside, which is very logical, but why not via the f2 square?! 12.♕f2 Now Black would probably continue with 12...b6! followed by f6! next and the white queen will be badly placed on f2.

12...b5

What could be more logical than the idea of playing ...b4 next.

13.♗xc5

White wants to develop the bishop to d3, but it is such a pity to give up the bishop for it. 13.f5!? leads to very interesting complications: 13...♘xe5 14.♕g3 with very unclear play, but it seems like White is not risking much.

13...♗xc5 14.♗d3

Maybe White wants to play ♗xh7 next, or perhaps a move like f5.

14...♗e7

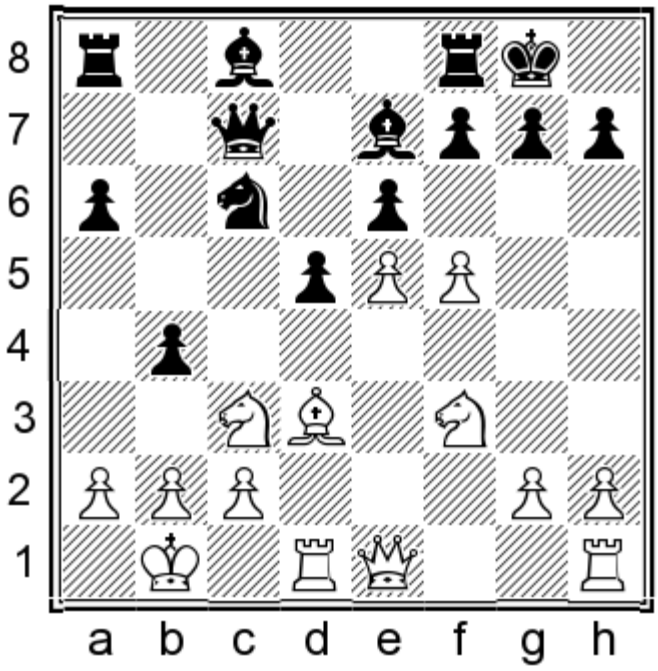
Defending against the direct threats, but sort of a bit too passive play in my opinion. I think 14...f6 looks more natural, as now that White no longer has the black-squared bishop, the f6 move gains in power. 15.♕h4 h6 16.♕h5 White wants to play ♕g6. 16...♘b4 and the position is very unclear.

15.f5!?

Negi starts a direct attack on the black king. The only advantage of this is that White is never risking a loss because of the perpetual check which he can give during the next couple of moves.

15...b4

the only move for Black



16.f6!

Of course this move is the key to all White's attempts.

16...gxf6

16...bxc3?? loses on the spot: 17.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 18.♕h4+ ♔g8 19.♘g5 and White mates.

17.♕g3+

White could make a draw by playing 17.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 18.♕h4+ ♔g7 19.♕g4+

17...♔h8 18.♕h3

The game becomes very sharp and it is obvious that White is not too happy with a draw.

18...f5 19.♗xf5!

Of course this move is not too difficult to find, but it is a nice one anyway. A move like 19.g4?? leads to nothing for White because after 19...bxc3 20.gxf5 exf5 Black is just a piece up.

19...exf5 20.♘xd5

So far things were very forced, but now Black needs to take a decision about where to put the queen. Of course it should be the 7th rank, to be able play f6 at some point, but whether to play ...♕b7 or ...♕a7 is a difficult question.

20...♕b7!

This is probably the right choice and it was likely decided on by intuition. The black queen will have more options from b7 than from a7 in the future.

21.♘f6?!

Once again White is clearly playing for a win, but is it not too much to wish for?! To a drawish endgame would lead 21.♕h6 ♖g8, and now comes the difference compared to 21.♘f6: 22.♘xe7 ♕xe7 23.♕xc6 White has won back the piece, but after 23...♗b7 the active black pieces probably give Black enough for equality.

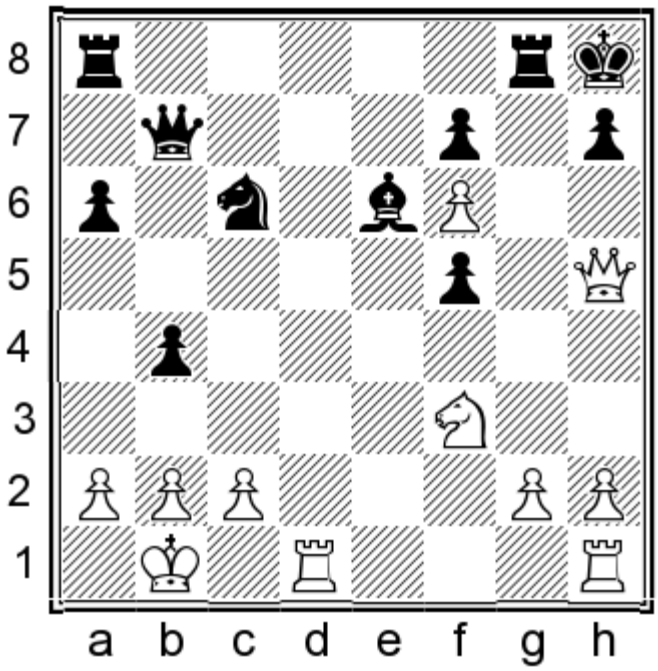
21...♗xf6 22.exf6

It is really hard to evaluate such a position without going into deep calculations. For now White wants to play ♘g5 and for some time it is going to be his only threat.

22...♖g8 23.♕h5

White retains the idea of playing ♘g5, and also the idea of playing h4 and ♘g5 next.

23...♗e6



24.♖d3!?

An interesting 'slow-play' of the attack, but Black is a full piece up!! 24.♘g5 ♖xg5 25.♕xg5 ♖g8 and Black is much better. 24.h4 also didn't work because of 24...♗xa2+!! and now Black is already the one who has a direct attack on the king. 25.♔a1 (*25.♔xa2 b3+ 26.♔a1 bxc2* and White is just lost.) 25...♖g6 26.♘g5 h6 and here things also look very bad for White.

24...♕c7?!

In a complicated position Black makes a mistake. To move the bishop away from e6 is very important, in order to avoid the trick with h4 and ♘g5, as the bishop is hanging on e6 in many lines. 24...♗c4! 25.♖d2 (*25.h4* doesn't work because of *25...♖g6 26.♘g5 h6*) 25...♕b5 followed by f4 and I think Black should be better here.

25.h4

Now we can see why it was so important not to have a bishop on e6.

25...♖g6

the only defense against ♘g5

26.♘g5 ♗xa2+

The only move. 26...h6 was losing to 27.♘xe6

27.♔xa2 h6

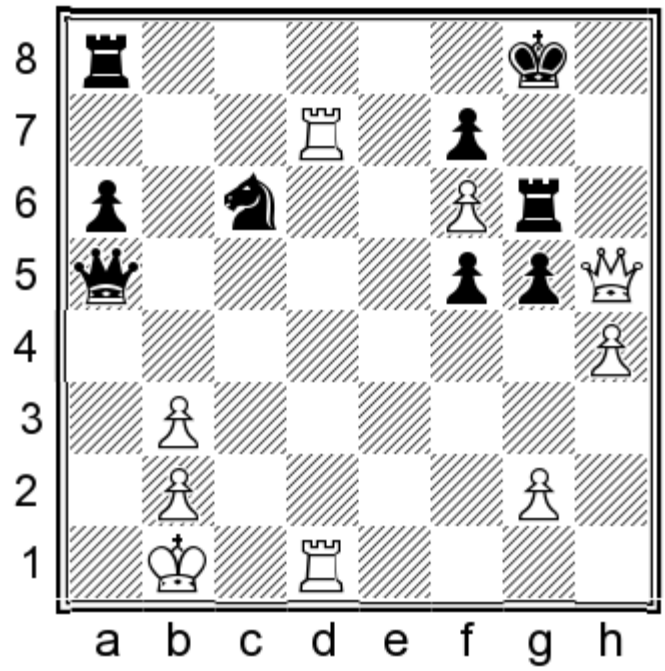
What a crazy position. The material on the board is totally even and both kings' positions are open. It is very hard to say who is better here.. .

28.♖hd1

White threatens to play ♖d7 next.

28...♘e5?!

Once again Black doesn't pick the best move. The correct move was 28...♔g8! which is, of course, not so easy to find. 29.♖d7 b3+! The position is very forced again. 30.cxb3 ♕a5+ 31.♔b1 hxg5 It seems like Black is on top, but here comes



32.♖xf7!! ♔xf7 33.hxg5 and once again we are jumping back into a total mess. Black is probably not risking too much here, but it is hard to say if he really has more than a draw.

29.♖d6

A good move. After 29.♖e3 ♔g8 and the silent 30.♔b1 the position of course remains very complicated, but it seems like White is slowly taking over.

29...♖f8

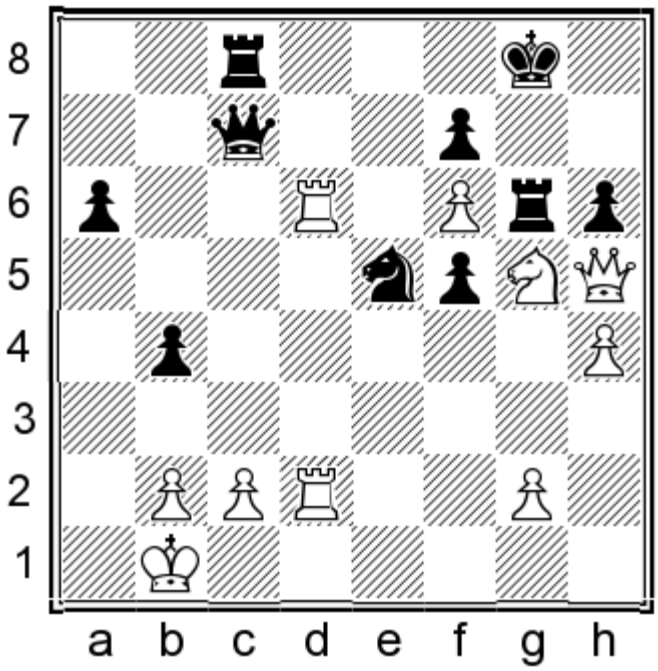
Taking the f7-pawn under control. After 29...♖c8 White has the very strong 30.♔a1! with the threat of playing ♘xf7 next. (*30.♘xf7+* of course didn't work immediately because *30...♕xf7+* comes with check.)

30.♔b1 ♖c8 31.♖1d2

A solid move, but also as in previous lines 31.♔a1 would be good.

31...♔g8

After this move it is all over, but could Black still save the game?!



Maybe 31...♖e8 could be a try, but now White also has the very strong 32.♖e2! The idea becomes clear after 32...♕xd6 33.♘xf7+ ♘xf7 34.♕xg6! with a totally winning position for White. But such moves are really hard to find during a practical game.

32.♕d1!

A very nice finishing move. Black can't keep control over the 8th rank.

32...hxg5 33.♖d8+

Now everything is forced...

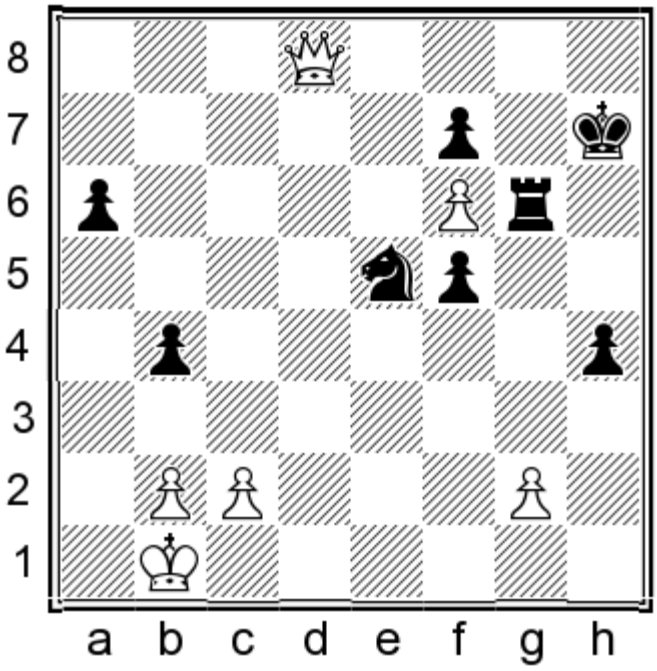
33...♔h7 34.♖xc8 ♕xc8 35.♖d8 ♕xd8

Black didn't have a choice. 35...♕c6 was losing to 36.♕h5+ ♖h6 37.♖h8+ ♔xh8 38.♕xh6+ ♔g8 39.♕g7#

36.♕xd8

After all the excitement White ends in a completely winning position with an extra queen.

36...gxh4



37.♕e7

The last exact move. Black has a choice between losing the f7-pawn or the knight on e5 and both mean losing the game. A great win by Negi who dealt perfectly well with the complications and a lot of nice tactical motifs. It would also be very interesting to know whether this could all have been Negi's preparation?!

1–0

GAME 34
V. Kramnik (2760)
E. Inarkiev (2688)
Petrosian Memorial 2014
Moscow RUS (2)
05.11.2014, [D37]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

A tough start for Inarkiev. After getting positionally outplayed by Grischuk in the first round, here we see him facing Kramnik — with the black pieces again. This time he falls to a tactical masterpiece.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7

The Queen's Gambit Declined is considered to be rock solid, but Kramnik manages to lead the game into wild waters.

5.♕c2

A rare move. The two main lines are 5.♗g5 and 5.♗f4. 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗xf6 (*6.♗h4* is the main move here.) 6...♗xf6 7.♕c2 dxc4! 8.e3 c5! is Black's correct reaction, which is why Kramnik starts with 5.♕c2.

5...0-0

As far as I know, 5...c5 is an interesting option for Black — with the idea of 6.dxc5 d4 and White is not in time to pin with ♖d1.

6.♗g5 c5

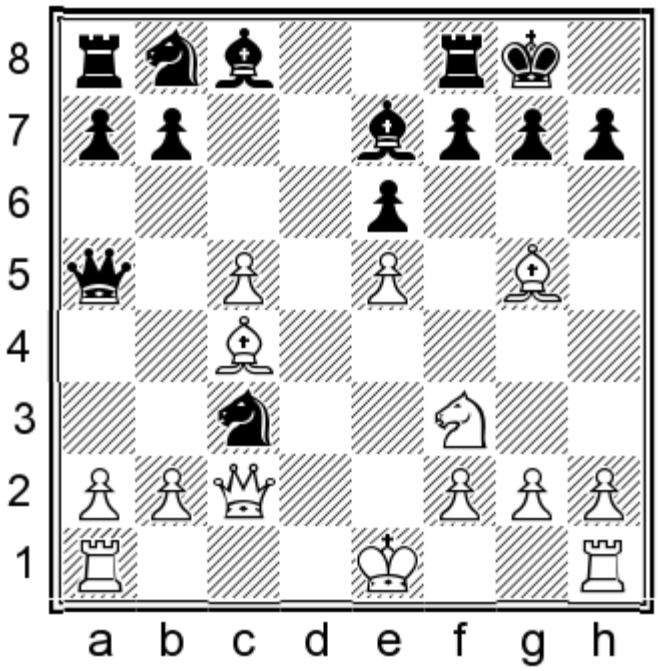
Now on 6...h6 7.♗xf6 ♗xf6 White plays 8.0-0-0 followed by e4 next move. The Mamedyarov-Bacrot game finished with a nice crush by White and it was commented on by Arkadij in a previous CEWN.

7.dxc5 dxc4 8.e4!

We are still following theory, but it is already given as better for White. It is also confirmed by the time-consumption of the players, as Kramnik had blitzed out his moves, while Inarkiev was already in deep thought.

8...♘fd7

The most common move is 8...♕a5 9.e5 ♘d5 10.♗xc4 ♘xc3



11.0-0! This was played by Kasparov against Karpov in their WC match in 1987 and Kasparov gained an edge. Black cannot save his extra piece with 11...♘d5 because of 12.♗xd5 ♗xg5 13.♘xg5 and mate is threatened on h7!

9.♗f4!

A logical retreat. Kramnik does not ease his opponent's position by trading pieces. The bishop on f4 is going to be well-placed, controlling the important squares on the h2-b8 diagonal. A standard reaction in many openings is to send it away by ♘h5, but it does not work anymore.

9...b5

The novelty of the game, but not a prepared one, as Black ends up in a difficult position... 9...♘xc5 10.♗xc4 followed by normal development with 0-0, ♖fd1 and ♖ac1 is also better for White.

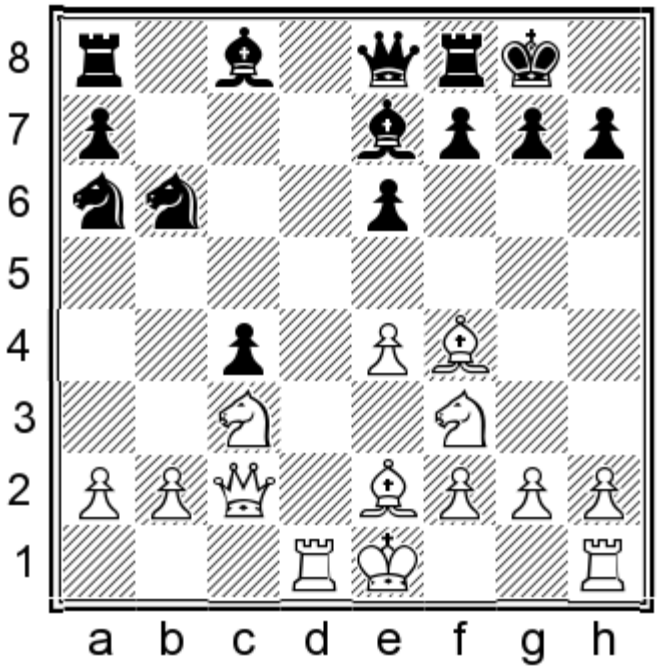
10.cxb6 ♘xb6

The material is balanced, but the c4-pawn is isolated and weak. The white pieces are also better placed and developed, so everything confirms White's advantage. It is interesting to mention that in the other game commented by me this week, Inarkiev ended up with the same unfortunate pawn structure against Grischuk.

11.♖d1 ♕e8 12.♗e2

Kramnik finishes development.

12...♘a6



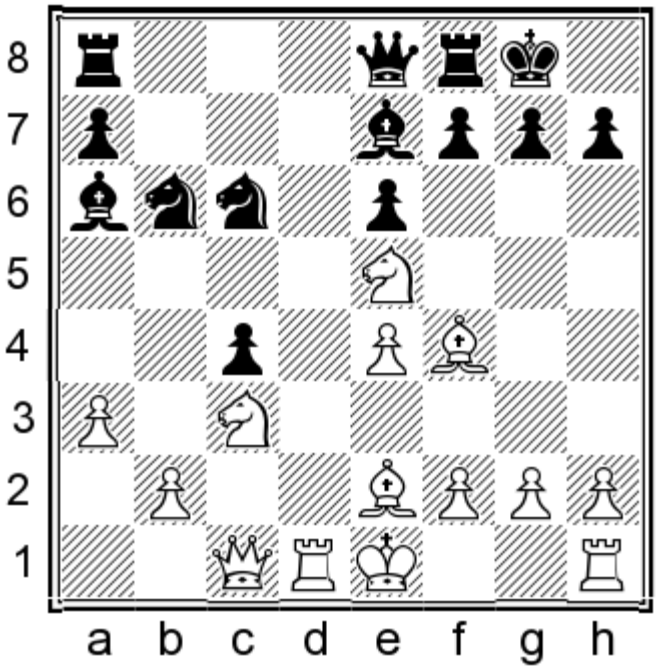
13.♘e5!

A very strong intermediate attack on c4 to confuse Black's ideal piece arrangement. In case of some normal move like 13.0-0 Black could have replied with 13...♘c5 14.♘e5 ♗a6 followed by ...♖c8 and he gets a much better version than the game — with the knight on c5 ready to occupy the d3 square after sending away the knight from e5.

13...♘b4

Black had no time to get the ideal ...♘c5-♗a6 arrangement.

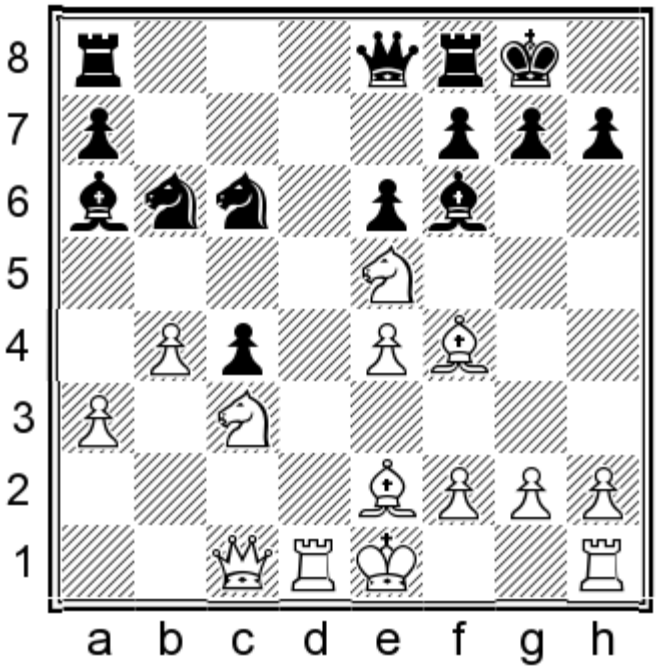
14.♕c1 ♗a6 15.a3 ♘c6



16.b4!

A great positional move, using the pin on the e2-a6 diagonal It limits the movement of the black pieces and prevents ...♘a5-b3. White is also threatening sometimes b5, or if Black leaves the b4 square then a4-a5 could be very strong. It also gets rid of the backward b2 pawn. The only drawback is that it makes a passed pawn out of c4, but this is excellently blockaded by the knight, so it cannot be counted as a real minus.

16...♗f6



17.♘f3!

Just like 9.♗f4 in the opening, this is another excellent positional retreat to keep the pieces on the board. White intends to push Black back with e5, and b5 is already threatening to win a piece. 17.♘g4 is worse in view of 17...♗d4! and ...e5 next! It is important to control the d4-square. 18.b5 now is met by ...♗xc3 check and the b5 pawn falls. 17.♘xc6 ♕xc6 18.e5? and ♗f3 next does not win an exchange, but loses to 18...♕xg2.

17...♗xc3+

Black pins his counterplay to the light squares on the queenside. He intends to play ...♗b5, ...♘a4, ...a6 and ...c3 at some point.

18.♕xc3 ♕c8

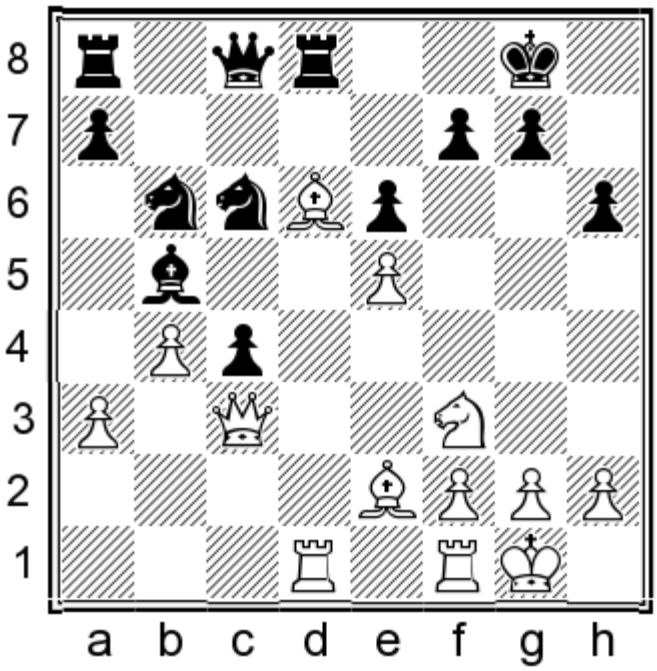
The dark-squared bishop is missing, therefore White was threatening ♗d6. Inarkiev frees the rook from f8 before starting his ...♗b5 plan...

19.0-0 ♗b5 20.♗d6 ♖d8 21.e5

Of course, it is nice to install such a bishop on d6! It paralyzes Black and cuts him from the connection to the kingside. All the black pieces are driven to the queenside and a potential attack against the g8 king could be decisive. Of course, at the moment White is also far from the decisive breakthrough, but he can be there in just a few moves.

21...h6

Black was afraid of ♘g5, which is quite understandable.



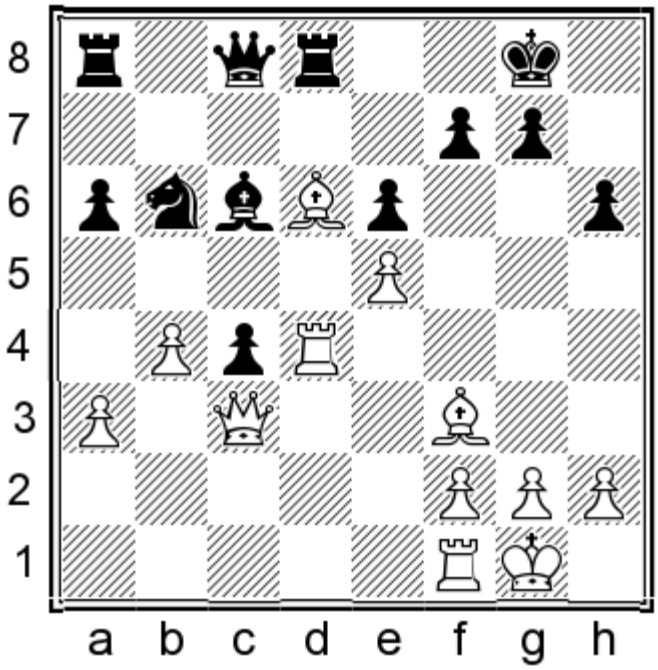
22.♘d4

Kramnik opens the way to the kingside. He is ready to drop the queen off there and after ...♘xd4 ♖xd4 the rook is only one move away from g4. Another potential attacking idea could be f4-f5, launching a different kind of very dangerous attack.

22...a6 23.♗f3

Forcing Black to invite the rook to the 4th rank.

23...♘xd4 24.♖xd4 ♗c6



25.♗e2

It is very clever to keep the two bishops on the board. The light-squared bishop could be very useful and fulfil many different functions. However, it is already debatable where that bishop should go. 25.♗h5 was an alternative, where the bishop might take part in the attack by keeping an eye on the f7 pawn. 25.♗d1 also had its point. It goes to c2 and something like ♗b1 and ♕c2 could create decisive threats. ♗a4 drops the c4 pawn. Kramnik decides to retreat to e2, pinning the black pieces to the c4-pawn.

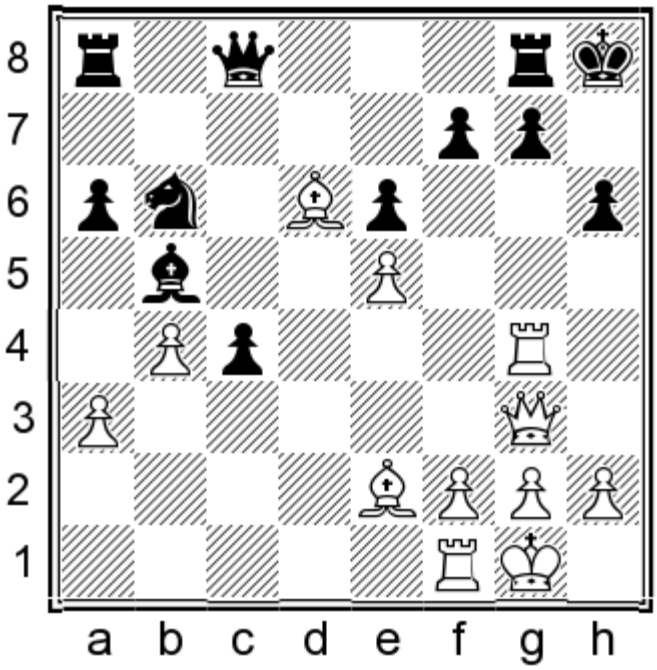
25...♗b5 26.♖g4 ♔h8

There was no other defense for Black against ♕g3, as a move with the g-pawn would be a decisive weakening.

27.♕g3

27.♖c1 would have been more circumspect, with the idea of airlifting the rook into the attack along the 3rd rank.

27...♖g8



Black could actually have gotten decent counterplay by playing 27...c3! 28.♖xg7 ♖g8! Forcing a couple of exchanges. (*28...♗xe2* is also tempting, but it runs into *29.♖xf7 ♖g8 30.♕f4 ♖g6 31.♖f8+ ♕xf8 32.♗xf8 ♗xf1 33.♔xf1* and White is able to stop the c-pawn. *33...c2 34.♗xh6 ♖c8 35.♕h4! ♔g8 36.♗c1* is a strange computer line, but White seems to be winning after all.) 29.♖xg8+ ♕xg8 30.♕f3 ♘d5 followed by ♕g6. White should be better with the extra pawn, but the safely protected pawn on c3 gives Black decent counterplay.

28.♖h4!

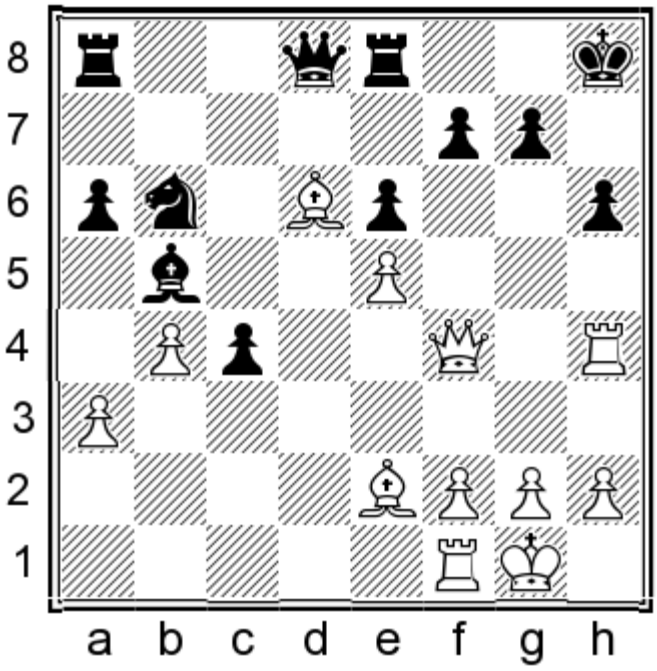
Changing the target. After the black rook blocked the king's escape route, ♖xh6 gxh6 ♕xh6 could be mate. Therefore White is threatening ♕e3, double-attacking on b6 and h6!

28...♕d8

Keeping an eye on h4 prevents ♕e3. 28...c3 loses to 29.♗xb5 axb5 30.♕e3!+– ♘d5 31.♖xh6+ gxh6 32.♕xh6#; 28...♘d5 29.♕g5 is also very strong.

29.♕f4! ♖e8

Black seemingly prevents the ♖xh6 threat by freeing the g8 square for the king...



29...g5 is strongly met by 30.♕c1! and the rook is not hanging. The g5 weakening should be crucial. (But not *30.♖xh6+?* because after *30...♔g7* White is forced to trade queens to save the rook, but of course it is not his idea... *31.♕f6+ ♕xf6 32.♖xf6 ♘d5 33.♖f3 c3* with compensation for the pawn.)

30.♖xh6+!!

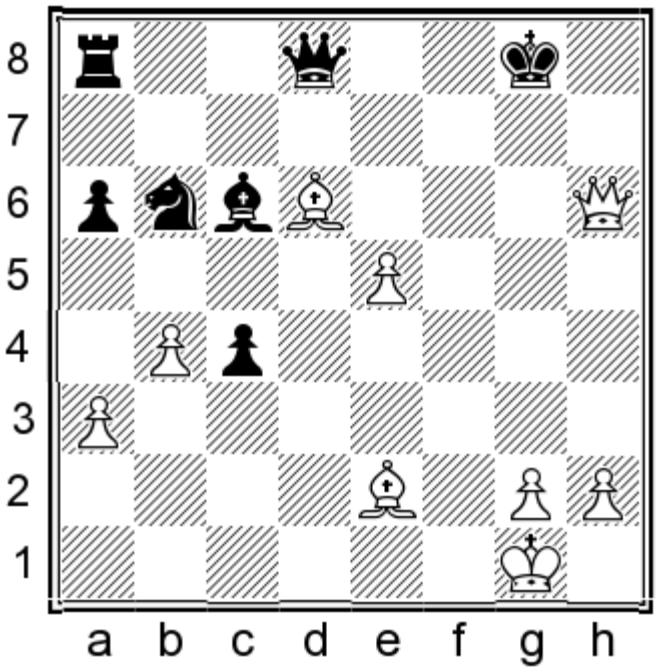
A brilliant tactical blow!

30...gxh6 31.♕xh6+ ♔g8 32.f4?!

This is very tempting, but the wrong follow-up after the rook sacrifice. White intends to lift the rook to the 3rd rank, but the same idea could have been executed in a more effective version. 32.♖d1! with the idea of ♖d4 was winning. 32...c3 White has different wins, but a pretty one is 33.♖d3! ♗xd3 34.♗xd3 f5 35.exf6 ♖a7 36.♕g6+ ♔h8 37.f7+– and ♗e5 mates next move.

32...♗c6 33.♗f3?!

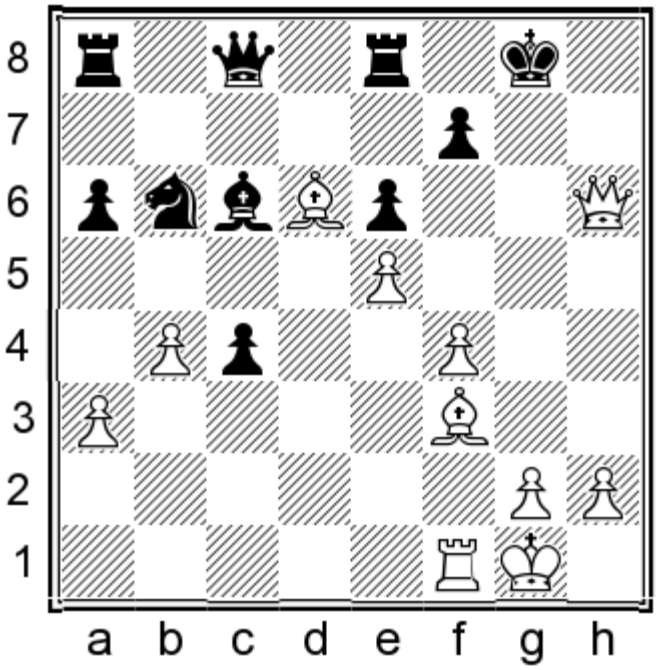
The most natural human move, trying to get the rook to the 3rd rank, but Black has a hidden defense... 33.f5! was the winning continuation, although the winning line is almost impossible to find for a human. 33...exf5 34.♖xf5 ♖e6 35.♖g5+ ♖g6 36.♖xg6+ fxg6 37.♕xg6+ ♔h8 38.♕h6+ ♔g8



This is all forced and it seems like a draw. However White can play for more with 39.♗g4! ♗d5 40.e6! White creates the decisive threat of ♗e5 or ♕g6 check first and then ♗e5, therefore Black is forced to take more material... 40...♕xd6 41.♕g6+ ♔h8 42.♕f6+ ♔g8 43.♕f7+ ♔h8 44.♗f5! and White wins! 44...♖a7 45.♕xa7 ♗b7 46.♕xb7 and there is no perpetual check with a single black queen. 46...♕d4+ 47.♔f1 ♕f4+ 48.♕f3+–

33...♕c8?

Missing the chance.



33...♘c8!! suggested by the computer seems to save Black from the biggest problems. 34.♗xc6 ♘xd6! (*34...*♕*b6+* loses to *35.*♗*c5* ♕*xc6 36.f5!* The simple threat is f6 and ♕g7! *36...*♕*e4* with the idea of f6 ♕h7, but White wins after *37.*♕*g5+* ♔*h8 38.*♕*h5+* ♔*g8 39.fxe6+*– and there are problems on f7!) 35.exd6 ♕b6+ 36.♖f2 ♕xc6 37.♖f3 ♕xf3 38.gxf3 ♖ad8 White ends up with two extra pawns, but this is a typical situation where the rooks are going to be

superior to the queen. In my opinion, a draw is the most likely result now.

34.f5!

Kramnik does not give Inarkiev any more chances. He brings the f1-rook into the game with decisive effect.

34...exf5 35.♕g5+!

An important intermediate check to start with! The direct 35.♗xc6 allows 35...♖e6!

35...♔h8 36.♗xc6 ♖e6

36...♕xc6 White can choose between several wins here. One of them is 37.♖xf5 ♖e6 38.♕h5+ ♔g8 39.♕xf7++–

37.♖xf5

Threatening ♕h5 and taking on f7 with check.

37...♖a7 38.♕h4+ ♔g7 39.♖h5 ♕g8 40.♗e4

There is no defense against the mate!

1–0

GAME 35
V. Anand (2792)
M. Carlsen (2863)
WCh 2014 Sochi RUS (3)
11.11.2014, [D37]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

Just as in the WCC match in 2012 against Gelfand, Anand strikes back immediately after his loss. As we go deeper into the game, it turns out to be very difficult to understand how Carlsen and his team prepared for this game...

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6

Carlsen deviates from the first game of the match, where he employed the Gruenfeld Defense.

3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7

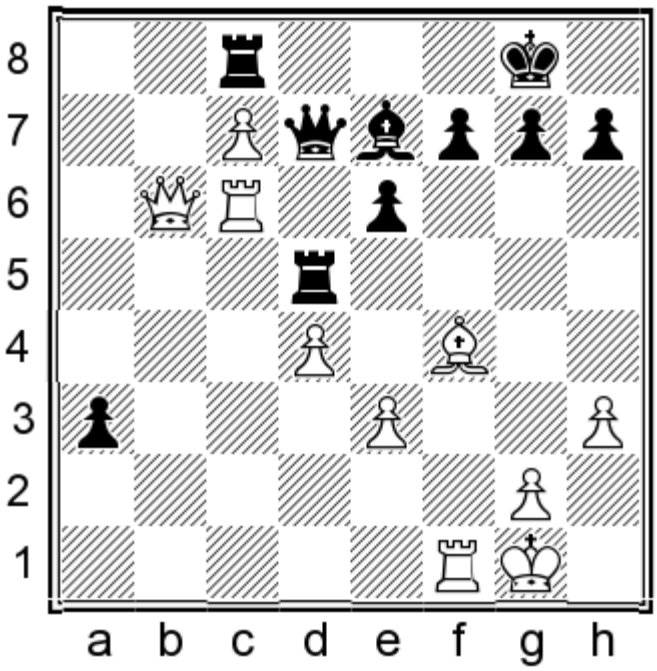
The Queen’s Gambit Declined is highly popular nowadays at the highest level.

5.♗f4 0-0 6.e3 ♘bd7 7.c5 c6

The old main line. Within a week, Kramnik twice successfully played the newly-fashionable move 7...♘h5 which should be the better option for Black.

8.♗d3

The alternative is 8.h3 I would like to draw your attention to the following game: 8...b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 ♗a6 11.♗xa6 ♖xa6 12.b5 cxb5 13.c6 ♕c8 14.c7 b4 15.♘b5 a4 16.♖c1 ♘e4 17.♘d2 ♘df6 18.f3 ♖a5 19.♘xe4 ♘xe4 20.fxe4 ♖xb5 21.♕xa4 ♖a5 22.♕c6 bxa3 23.exd5 ♖xd5 24.♕xb6 ♕d7 25.0-0 ♖c8 26.♖c6



We have exactly the same position as in the game, the only difference being that the pawn is on h3, which is of course useful for White, but not a decisive difference as White is close to winning in any case. It is quite certain that Anand knew about this game. Only the correct move-order played an important role, but it was also shown by Aronian as we will see later in the game... This game, just like our present game, finished in a few moves. 26...h6 27.♖fc1 ♔h7 28.♕a6 ♖f5 29.♗d6! ♗h4 30.♕xa3 Black resigned soon in Tomashevsky-Riazantsev, Moscow 2008.

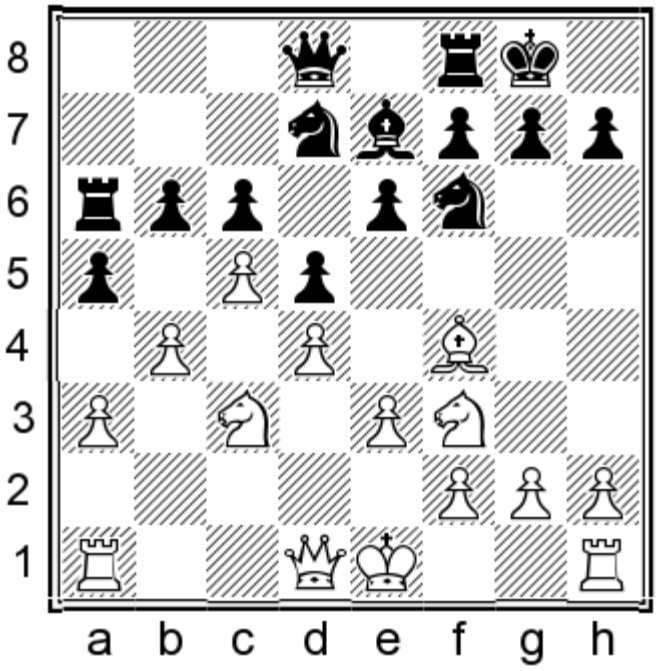
8...b6 9.b4 a5

Black tries to undermine the queenside, but White successfully keeps the pawn structure and preserves his space advantage.

10.a3 ♗a6 11.♗xa6

11.0-0 is the old main line.

11...♖xa6



12.b5!

A nice breakthrough, but it is all theory... Both players were blitzing out the moves.

12...cxb5 13.c6

White seems to win a piece as the knight has no free square other than b8, but it loses to the fork with c7! However

13...♕c8!

saves the piece by pinning the c3-knight.

14.c7

This is the point of the b5-break and the pawn sacrifice: White creates a powerful passed pawn on c7, which paralyzes the black pieces.

14...b4 15.♘b5!

Strengthening the c7 pawn!

15...a4!

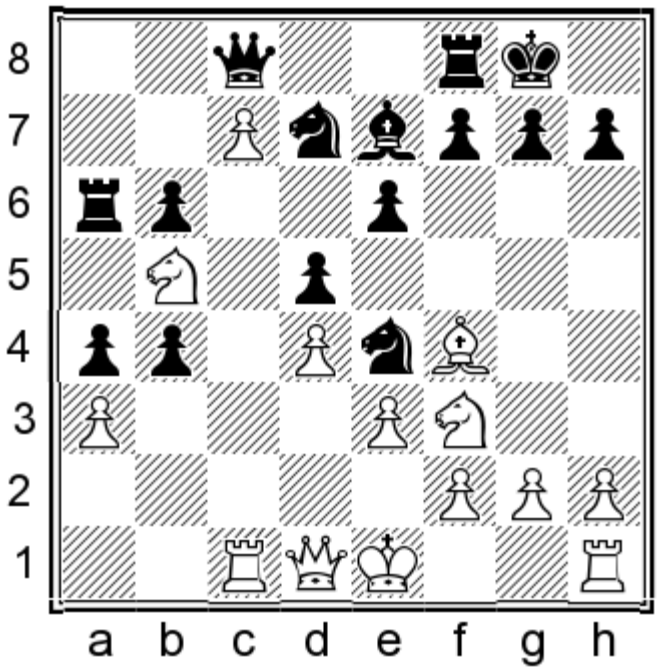
A very important resource for Black. He should try to kick out the b5 knight from its safe place, so he prepares ...♖a5 and also prevents ♕a4, which would stabilize the knight.

16.♖c1!

Supporting the c-pawn from behind and creating the decisive threat of ♗d6, after which he inevitably frees the d6 square for the knight, which would send away the queen from c8 and the pawn promotes.

16...♘e4

Preventing ♗d6!



16...bxa3? 17.♗d6+– is game over. 16...♖a5 is also met by 17.♗d6! ♖xb5 18.♗xe7 and the best for Black is to sacrifice an exchange before White could take on b4 and a4. 18...b3 19.♗xf8 ♘xf8 20.0-0 must be better for White, ♕d3 is coming next.

17.♘g5!!

This was Aronian's novelty last year. It seems very strange that Carlsen did not know anything about it. He spent more than 40 minutes here. White tries to deflect the pieces from the d6 square. 17.♘d2 was less convincing in a previous game, because Black could play 17...♘c3 18.♘xc3 bxc3 19.♖xc3 b5 followed by ♘b6-c4.

17...♘df6

After long thought, Carlsen repeated Adams's reply. 17...♗xg5 18.♗xg5 ♖a5 Here probably the most precise is (*18...♘xg5? 19.♘d6 ♕a8 20.c8=♕+–*) 19.♕e2! ♖xb5 20.♕xb5 ♘xg5 21.axb4 with a strong initiative due to the c7 pawn. Black's pieces are unco-ordinated. Compared to the 17.♘d2 line 17...♘c3 is now met by 18.♘xc3 bxc3 19.♕d3! with tempo! 19...♗xg5 20.♗xg5 and Black is lacking his very important dark-squared bishop. White takes on c3 next and saves his c7 pawn for the entire game. It cannot be taken now as a6 is hanging. 17...♘xg5 runs into 18.♗d6!! The only move is (*18.♗xg5 ♘f6* is less clear.) 18...♖a5 but it does not solve the problems since after 19.♗xe7 ♖xb5 20.axb4 ♖e8 21.♕xa4 ♖xe7 22.♕xb5 Black is in trouble again.

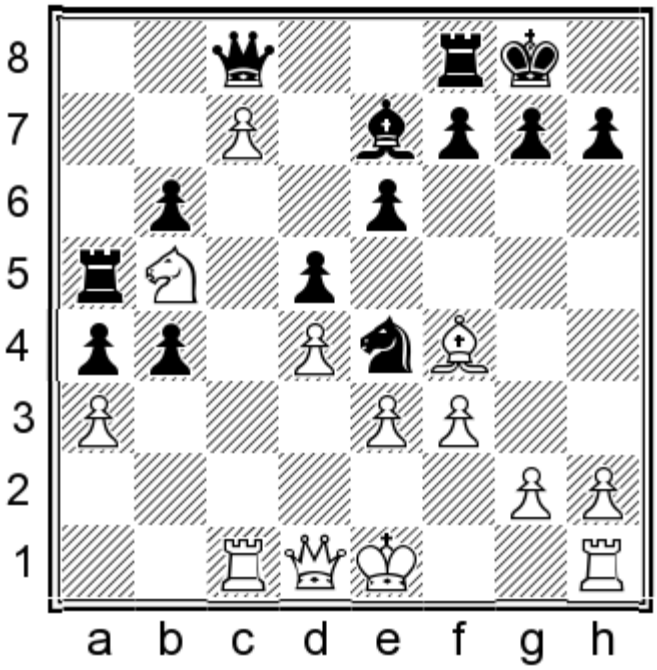
18.♘xe4 ♘xe4

18...dxe4 frees the d5-square for the knight, ♗d6 could met by ♘d5, but now 19.♘d6! ♗xd6 20.♗xd6 is again better for White, because the c7 pawn is safe.

19.f3!

The usual story! The fight revolves around the d6 square.

19...♖a5



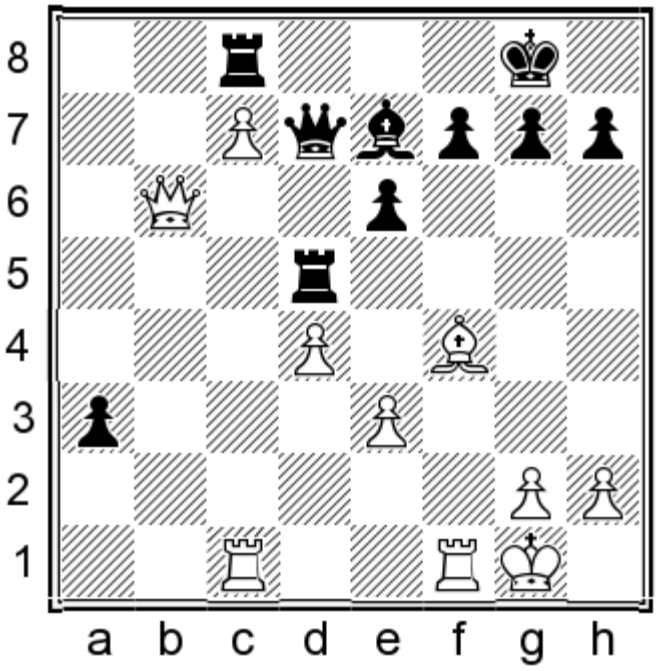
20.fxe4!

This is the novelty compared to the Aronian game, but now we transpose to the previously mentioned Tomashevsky-Riazantsev game, where the only difference is the pawn on h3. 20.♕e2 also looked strong, but Black has the strong answer 20...♕d7! 21.fxe4 ♖c8! and the b5 knight is suddenly trapped! 22.exd5 exd5 23.axb4 ♖xb5 24.0-0 ♖xb4 and Black was fine. Aronian-Adams, Bilbao 2013.

20...♖xb5 21.♕xa4 ♖a5 22.♕c6 bxa3 23.exd5 ♖xd5

23...exd5 24.0-0 is also bad for Black. White takes on b6 next move, or in case of ...b5 or ...♖a6 then d5 falls. The c7 passed pawn is much more dangerous than the one on a3. As soon as the pawn gets to a2, it becomes a weakness as it cannot be supported well enough, while the c7-pawn is completely safe because of the f4 bishop.

24.♕xb6 ♕d7 25.0-0 ♖c8



26.♖c6!

Depriving Black of any kind of counterplay. He cannot bring his d5-rook back to the game with ...♖b5. Anand had an extra hour and a winning advantage, even according to the machines. He also admitted that this position existed in his home analysis, but the strange thing is that he did not even require a strong novelty or something to achieve this — it was enough to be familiar with two top games, Aronian-Adams and Tomashevsky-Riazantsev. It is very hard to understand how Carlsen could end up in this position...

26...g5

This is already a kind of desperate move. Black realizes that he is lacking useful moves, while White can increase his advantage by playing ♖fc1 followed by ♕a6 and ♖b6-b8 for example. 26...♗g5 instantly loses to 27.♗xg5 ♖xg5 28.♖d6!+– and ♖d8.

27.♗g3

27.♗e5 was also strong enough.

27...♗b4

A nice try to confuse matters, but it does not help. Black pins his hopes to ...♗d2, counterattacking the e3-pawn or sometimes ...♗a5 might be a small hope for salvation... However Anand reacts perfectly! 27...♖a5 was a critical line to check. It would be a huge improvement for Black if he could transfer his rook to a8. That would support the a-pawn and also control the c8 promoting square. Unfortunately for Black, it runs into 28.♖xe6! ♕xe6 29.♕xa5 ♕xe3+ 30.♔h1 and White is threatening the direct win by ♕f5! 30...♕d3 31.♖e1+– leaves Black in a hopeless situation. ♕e5 or d5 is coming next. Black has no chance to advance the a-pawn, the c7 one is always much faster.

28.♖a1!

An excellent prophylactic move! Black must forget about his ...♗d2 idea as it always drops the a3-pawn and Black has no useful move left.

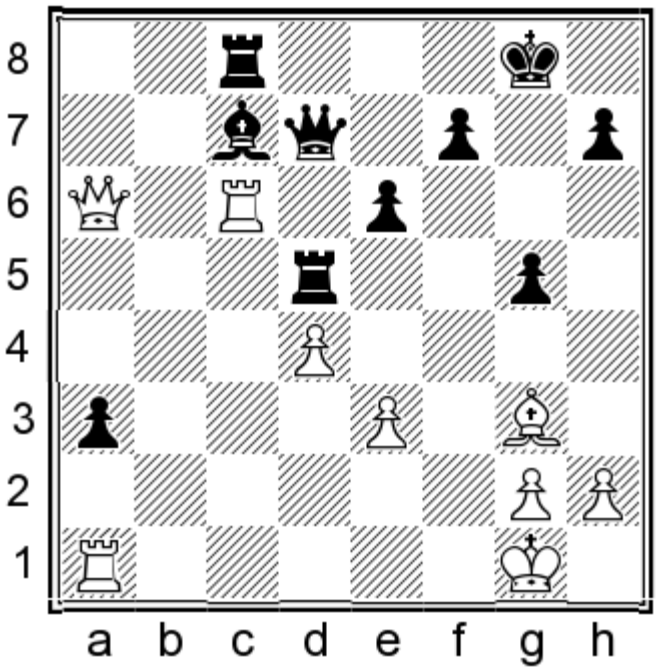
28...♗a5

This loses, but it was probably already over. In case of some waiting move like 28...h6 White could improve his position with 29.h3! opening the back rank, just in case. 29...♔h7 30.♖a2! followed by ♖ac2, after which the bishop is hanging on b4 and White plays ♕a6, ♖b6-b8 next. Black cannot create any counterplay.

29.♕a6

White is threatening to play ♖xa3.

29...♗xc7



29...♗b4 30.♖b6!+– and ♖b8 wins next.;

29...♖xc7 30.♗xc7 ♗xc7 31.♖xa3+– is also hopeless.

30.♕c4!

The last precise move! Black loses huge material because of the pin on the c-file. Black's last trick was 30.♖ac1? which seems to be winning as well, but actually after 30...♖a5! Black pushes a2 next and survives.

30...e5 31.♗xe5 ♖xe5 32.dxe5

White is an exchange up and Black still cannot escape the deadly pin on the c-file.

32...♕e7 33.e6

The last trap to be careful about was 33.♖c1 a2 34.♕xa2? ♕xe5 and Black might hope for salvation. Everything else is just winning for White.

33...♔f8 34.♖c1

A very important victory for Anand, to win back his confidence and to come back into the match. It will be very

interesting to follow how such a game will affect the match.

1–0

GAME 36
Y. Kryvoruchko (2706)
P. Eljanov (2719)
83rd ch-UKR 2014 Lviv UKR (9.3)
20.11.2014, [B12]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

The Ukrainian Championships was a really hard-fought tournament. All the players wanted to win with both colors, therefore there were many very interesting encounters, such as the following one.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5

The Advance Variation of the Caro-Kann Defense.

4.♘f3 e6 5.♗e2 ♘e7

Black avoids a theoretical battle in the extremely sharp 5...c5 lines and drives the game onto less-explored territory.

6.c3 h6 7.♘bd2 ♘d7 8.0-0 ♕c7

Black slowly prepares for the standard ...c5 break, followed by ...♘c6, gaining space on the queenside and putting pressure on the central pawns.

9.♖e1

Preparing for the knight maneuver to f1 and then g3. In such positions it is more common to play 9.♘b3 in preparation for the ...c5 move.

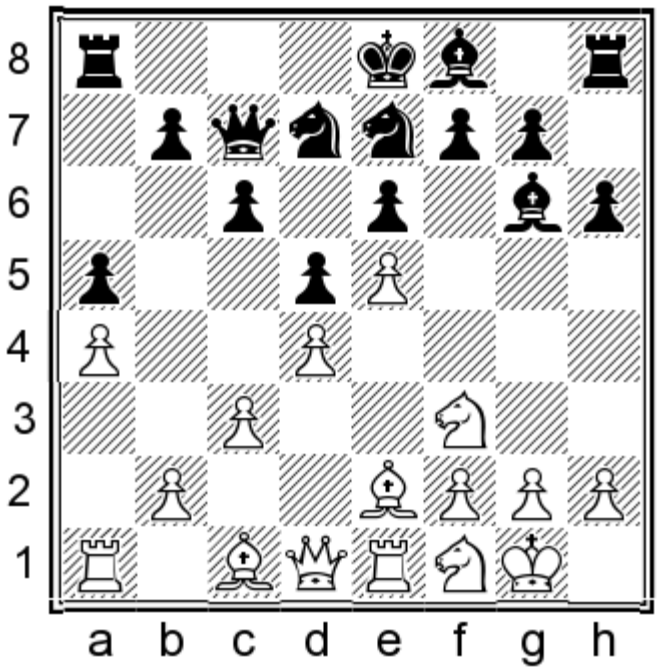
9...a5

A very interesting and deep plan from Eljanov, knowing what happened two moves later. We will come back to the details after the 11th move... Black intends to take space on the queenside with ...a4.

10.a4

The most natural reaction, not allowing Black to gain ground.

10...♗g6 11.♘f1



11...c5!

This is the standard break, but not after playing ...a5. Black would like to seize space and finish his development with ...♘c6, ...♗e7 and ...0-0 and if he succeeds, he ends up with a perfect position. However, it takes many moves and there should be a direct problem with the king standing in the center. White has won many nice games by blowing open the center with a well-timed c4. Kryvoruchko plays the most natural moves but, even so, Black's plan seems to work perfectly.

12.♗b5

This should be the drawback of including the ...a5-a4 pair of moves. The bishop has a very nice square on b5 and the explosion of the center with c4 seems to be even stronger now.

12...♘c6 13.c4

Very principled play, but Black consolidates with some very calm moves.

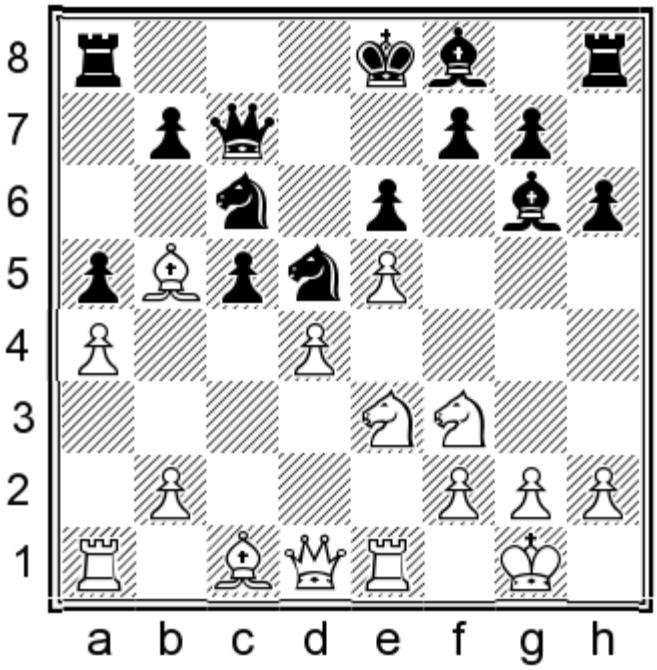
13...♘b6!

It is necessary for Black to hold the d5 square in order to be able to recapture with a piece. 13...dxc4 is strongly met by 14.d5! exd5 15.♘e3! and ♘xd5 next. This is a typical example of how Black often collapses in such positions.

14.cxd5

14.♘e3 0-0-0 is going to be a transposition.

14...♘xd5 15.♘e3



White continues with the most natural moves, trying to put pressure on the center as fast as possible as until now Black has had no time to secure the safety of his king.

15...0-0-0!?

A very brave decision, but here we can see another point of including the ...a5-a4 pair of moves. The drawback was the creation of the hole on b5, but there is another point as well — the hole on b4 turns out to be much more relevant. Black will effectively occupy it with his minor pieces, and also the pawn structure on the queenside is fixed, so it is much more difficult to launch an attack against the black king as b4 never works for White. 15...♖d8 is actually also possible, with the idea being to castle kingside after ...♗e7.

16.♘c4

White occupies all the holes on the queenside and intends to attack the a5 pawn with ♗d2. The machine tries to release the tension on the d4 pawn with 16.♗xc6, but on the other hand it gives up the nice bishop on b5. Black seems to be fine after 16...♕xc6 17.♗d2 ♘b4; 16.♘xd5 ♖xd5 attacking d4 and intending to finish the development with ...♗e7 and ...♖hd8 also looks better for Black.

16...♘db4!

Black has no time to waste, so Eljanov looks for counterplay on the c2-square and he intends to win the pawn on d4. White tries to point out the drawback of this move...

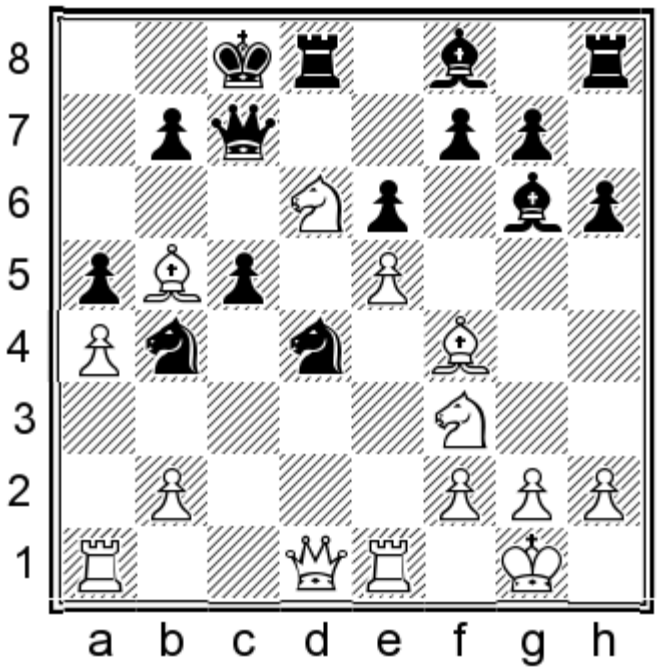
17.♗f4

After the knight has left the d5 square, White prepares to install his own knight on d6! 17.♗d2 was another logical way to continue and Black must react accurately with 17...cxd4! (It is not advisable to go for the exchange with *17...♘c2* as White gets more than enough compensation after *18.♗xc6 ♕xc6 19.♗xa5 ♘xa1 20.♕xa1* The rook cannot go to d5 or d7 because of ♘b6 and ♖e8 is a move which indicates that something went wrong for Black.) 18.♖c1 ♔b8 (*18...♖d5* is the computer move to protect the a5-pawn after ♗xc6 ♕xc6.) 19.♗xc6 ♕xc6 is a bit suspicious at first sight, but White has no good discovered attack with his knight. 20.♘xa5 ♕a6 followed by ♘d3 is good for Black.

17...♘xd4!

The alternative 17...♘c2 was wrong again. 18.♘d6+! ♔b8 (*18...♖xd6* is not the same as in the game. *19.exd6 ♗xd6 20.♗xd6 ♕xd6 21.♗xc6!* the point being that ...♕xc6 runs into ♘e5! and after taking on g6, the c2 knight is hanging. *21...bxc6* heavily weakens the king's position. *22.♖c1 ♘xe1 23.♕xe1*± with a very strong attack.) 19.dxc5 ♘xa1 20.♕xa1 That beautiful knight on d6 guarantees more than enough compensation for the exchange.

18.♘d6+



18...♖xd6!

This exchange sacrifice refutes White's idea, as within a few moves the position becomes simplified and Black ends up with a huge advantage...

19.exd6 ♗xd6 20.♗xd6 ♕xd6

I must say that the outcome of the middle-game is a bit strange to me. Black has a huge advantage despite the very natural play of both sides. Normally in such cases, there should equality, but here it is not true.

21.♘e5

Giving back the exchange is a clear sign of despair. In case of 21.♘xd4 cxd4 22.♖c1+ ♔b8∓ we can clearly see the domination of Black's position. Even materially he is doing fine with the two pawns for the exchange, but the supported d4-passed pawn causes the biggest problems. Black has no weaknesses in his camp, so there is nothing for White to attack with his rooks...

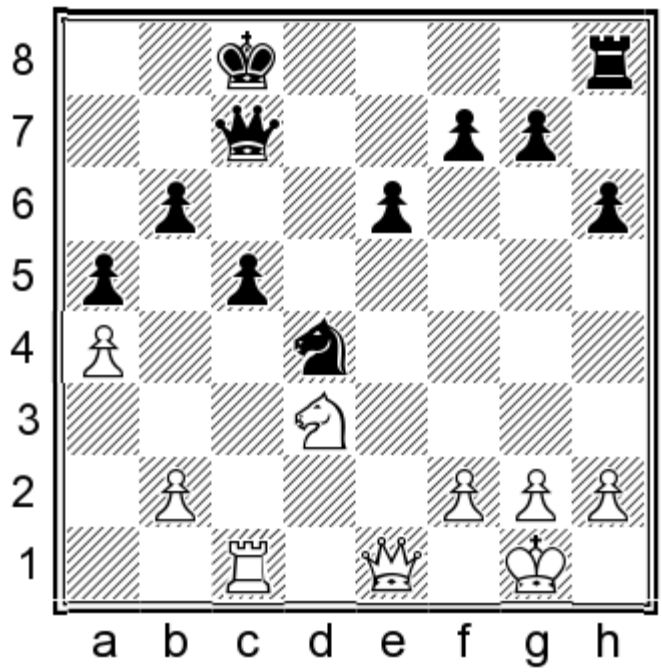
21...♘bc2 22.♖c1 ♘xe1 23.♕xe1

Black has converted his initiative into two extra pawns. Now the initiative has passed to White, but Black has enough resources to consolidate.

23...♕c7!

Protecting the important a5-pawn without weakening the position. The most natural 23...b6 weakens the h1–a8 diagonal and White could make use of it with 24.♗a6+ ♔b8 25.♘xg6 fxg6 26.♕e4 with counterplay.

24.♗d3 ♗xd3 25.♘xd3 b6



26.b4!

A necessary sacrifice to find counterplay. Otherwise the two extra pawns yield an easy win for Black.

26...axb4 27.a5 ♘b3! 28.axb6 ♕xb6?!

The first inaccuracy by Eljanov in this game, although his position remains winning. Black is already three pawns up, but his king is exposed. The most straightforward way to win was 28...♕d6! delaying the capture on b6 and pinning the white pieces instead. 29.♖d1 (29.b7+ ♔b8! (But not *29...♔xb7* after which *30.♘xc5+! ♘xc5 31.♕xb4+ ♔c6 32.♕a4+ ♔c7 33.♕a7+ ♔c6 34.♕a4+* holds by perpetual check.)) 29...♖d8! and White cannot create counterplay. 30.♘b2 ♕xb6–+

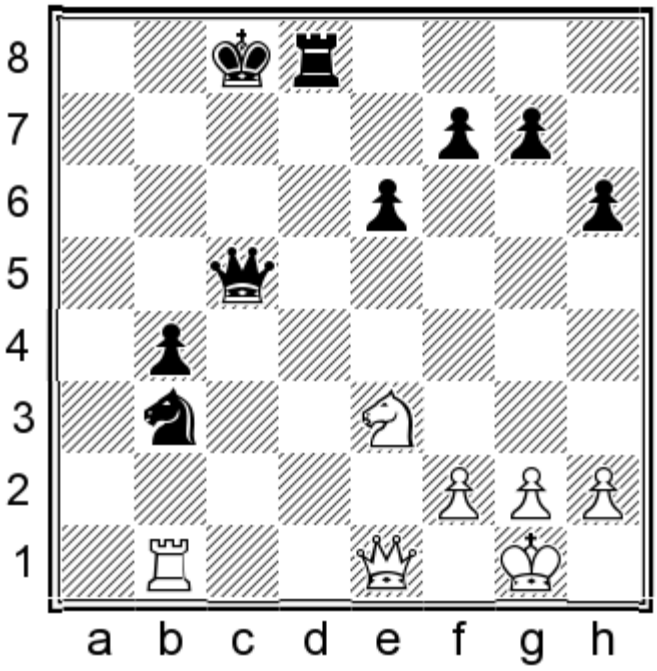
29.♖b1 c4 30.♘e5

On 30.♘xb4 ♖d8 31.♕c3 ♘d2–+ also wins for Black. ♕xf2 ♔xf2 ♘e4 is a hidden threat.

30...♖d8

Black finally brings his inactive rook to the game.

31.♘xc4 ♕c5 32.♘e3



Unfortunately for White 32.♖xb3 ♕xc4 33.♖xb4 did not work because of the weak back rank. 33...♕xb4! 34.♕xb4 ♖d1+

32...♖d3!

Black gave back one pawn, but two are still left from his material advantage. It was more important to bring the h8-rook into the game and the perfect co-operation of the black pieces deprives White from finding sufficient counterplay. A nice idea to improve the position could be to walk the king to the comfort zone on g8.

33.h3

White misses the next strong move, but his position was lost anyway. 33.♕e2 ♕c3–+

33...♖c3!

A very strong move, which forces the trade of rooks with ...♖c1 next move! White cannot avoid it and of course any kind of exchange brings Black's victory closer...

34.♕e2 ♖c1+ 35.♖xc1 ♘xc1 36.♕f3 b3! 37.♕xf7

37.♕a8+ ♔c7–+ and there are no more checks.

37...♘e2+!

White has no good square to move to from this check! But not 37...b2?? 38.♕g8+! followed by ♕xg7 check and ♕xb2.

38.♔f1

38.♔h2 is refuted by 38...♕c7+ 39.♕xc7+ ♔xc7 40.♘d1 ♔c6–+ simply promoting the b-pawn with the help of the king.

38...♘d4!

Black is threatening mate on c1 and also to promote the b-pawn in 2 moves with check. The game is over.

39.♕g8+ ♔b7 40.♕xg7+ ♔a6 41.♘d1 b2!

White resigned as 41...b2 42.♘xb2 ♕c1+ is mate.

0–1

GAME 37
L. Ding (2732)
F. Caruana (2820)
77th Tata Steel GpA
Wijk aan Zee NED (1.5)
10.01.2015, [D78]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

Fabiano Caruana found himself in a suspicious position through ‘preparation’, but some “invisible” mistakes by his strong Chinese rival allowed him to turn the game nicely in his favor.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6

Caruana would like to play the Gruenfeld and Ding Liren chooses the g3 system against it.

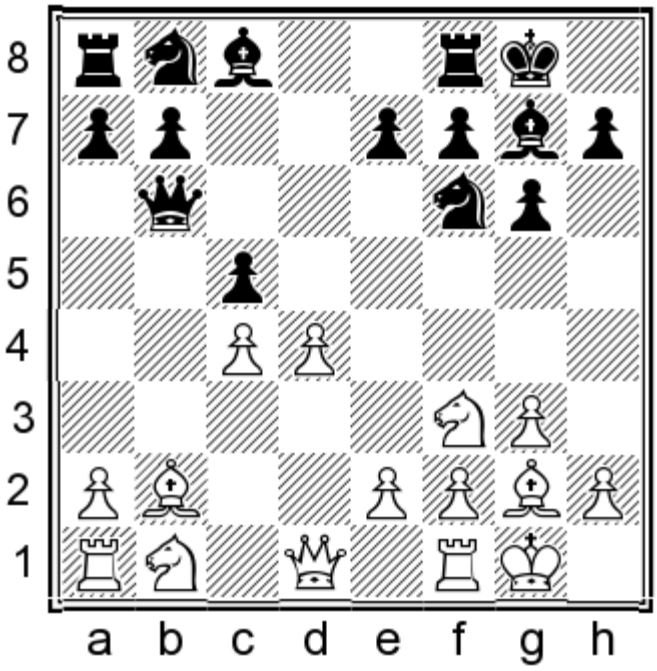
3.g3 c6 4.♗g2 d5 5.♘f3 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.b3

An ambitious line where White tries to hold the tension in the center. The main move is 7.cxd5. This temporarily weakens the long diagonal and Caruana directly makes use of it.

7...dxc4 8.bxc4 c5

We are still following a theoretical variation with hundreds of games in it.

9.♗b2 ♕b6



10.♕c1

This seems to be the new direction! Most of the previous games continued with 10.♕b3 ♘e4 11.e3 ♘c6 and theory considers this to be fine for Black.

10...cxd4 11.♘xd4

It is very interesting that in the very first round of the tournament there were two games from this position.

11...♘c6

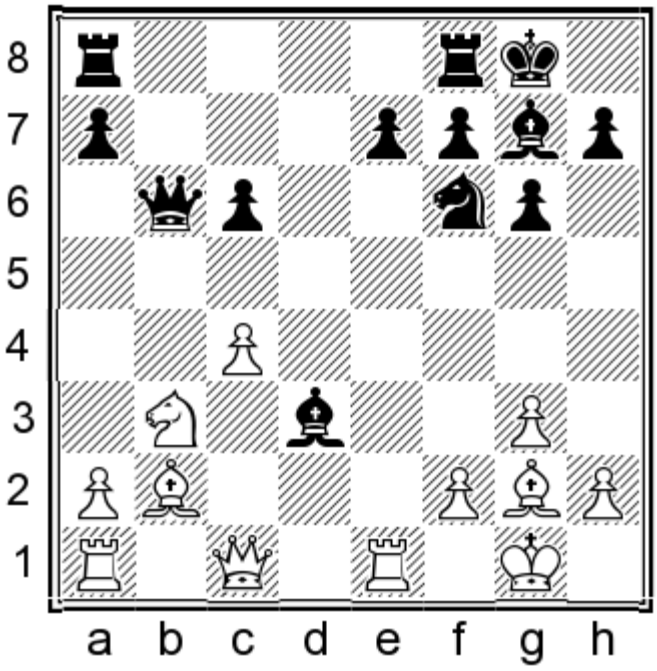
Caruana follows a recent game of Gelfand's. The other game continued with 11...♗d7 when Black prepares to develop the knight to c6 and recapture with the bishop. This seems to me to be a more accurate response than Caruana's choice. 12.♘d2 ♘c6 If Black manages to finish his development he might even get some advantage because of the better pawn structure and the isolated pawn on c4. 13.c5 ♕a6 14.♕c4 ♕xc4 15.♘xc4 ♖fc8 The isolated c-pawn has the advantage of offering an opened b-file. White might put some pressure on the b7-pawn, but it does not seem to be enough to achieve an edge... 16.♖ab1 ♖ab8 17.♖fc1 ♘e8 followed by a mass of exchanges and the game became very drawish, Shankland-Wei Yi, Wijk aan Zee Challengers 2015.

12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.♘d2!

This is the ideal development of the knight. It is heading to b3 from where it might potentially jump to c5, a5 or d4 — and at the same time it closes the b-file against Black's counterplay with ♖b8.

13...♗f5

This is the novelty. I am not sure if it was a prepared one or not. The previous game continued with 13...♗g4 14.♘b3! ♗xe2 15.♖e1 ♗d3



16.c5

(I guess Ding Liren wanted to improve on his own game by playing 16.♗d4! The idea is to keep the c5-square for the knight. This is quite hard to find over the board, because Black can save his extra pawn, but the activity turns out to be more important. White seems to get an advantage everywhere... 16...♕a6

(On *16...♕c7 17.♕c3 ♗f5 18.♗e5! ♕c8 19.♘a5!* If the c6 pawn falls, White gets an indisputable advantage with such active pieces. *19...♗d7 20.♖ab1!*± White has more than enough compensation for the pawn. Black cannot really move any of his pieces. The c6 and e7 pawns are doomed.)

17.♖e3! Very strong computer moves. The complications favor White in all the lines. 17...♗f5

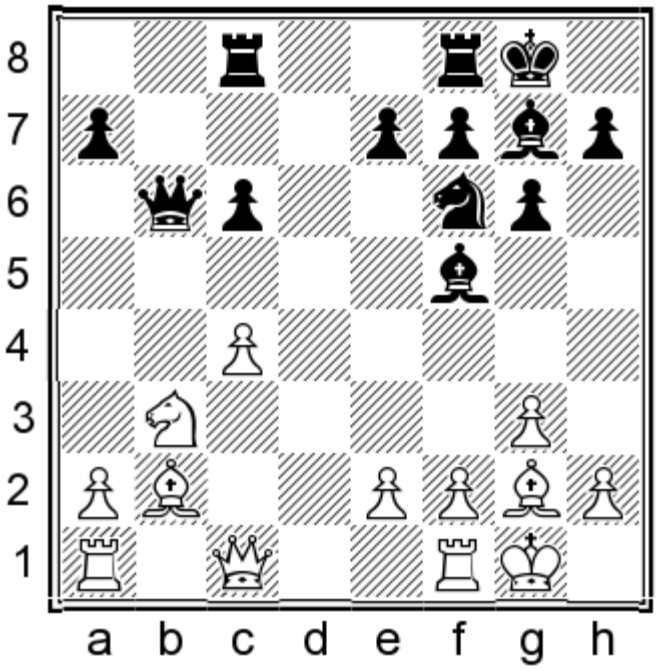
(*17...♗xc4?* drops the bishop after *18.♘c5 ♕b5 19.♖b1+–; 17...♕xc4* is strongly met by *18.♕d2! ♗f5 19.♘a5! ♕c2 20.♕xc2 ♗xc2 21.♘xc6*± White wins back the e7-pawn next move and his pieces are going to be dominant. The a1-rook also joins the game with tempo.)

18.♖xe7 ♖fe8 19.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 20.♕c3± White is better again.)

16...♕a6 17.♖xe7 ♖ae8 and Black equalized in the game Ding Liren-Gelfand, Moscow 2014.

14.♘b3 ♖ac8

Black wishes to push ...c5! which limits the movement of the b3 knight. Afterwards White could forget about the ♘d4 or ♗d4-♘c5 ideas. It also gets rid of the weakness on c6 and fixes the white pawn on c4, which might potentially become a target as happened in the game.



14...♖ad8 was very natural, but it runs into the very strong 15.♗c3! and suddenly it is not easy to deal with the ♗a5 and ♘a5 threats. However 14...♖fd8! seems to be stronger. The point is that after 15.♗c3 (It also prevents the deep idea of White's which he could execute in the game *15.e4?* which does not work now because after *15...♗xe4 16.♗xf6 ♗xg2 17.♗xg7 ♗xf1* the f8 rook is not hanging...) 15...a5! works!

15.e4!

Very well played! Gaining space and pushing back the black pieces.

15...♗e6

A forced retreat. The pawn could not be taken either way... 15...♘xe4? drops a piece after 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.g4! 15...♗xe4? is refuted by 16.♗xf6! ♗xg2 17.♗xg7 ♗xf1 18.♗xf8+– and White ends up with an extra piece.

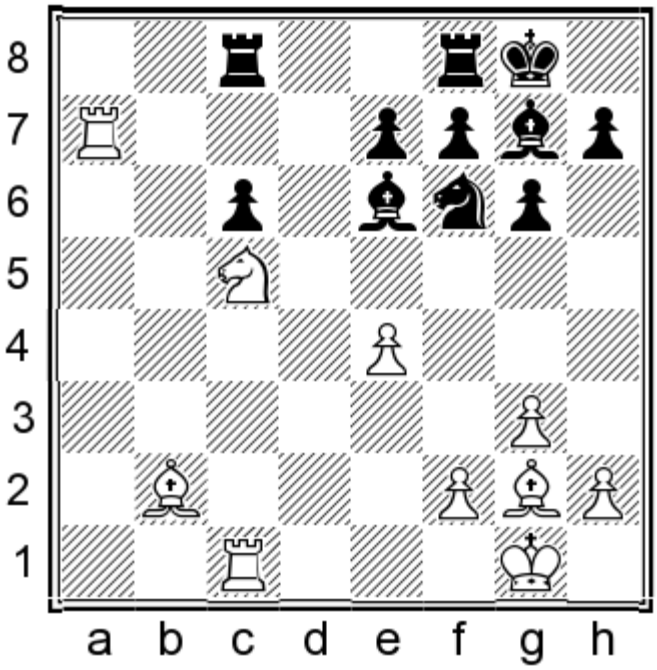
16.e5?

This is a very natural move, but it is wrong. It further pushes back the black pieces, opens the diagonal of the g2-bishop, closes the one on g7, but somehow it turns out to be a huge weakening of the pawn structure and this becomes the most important positional factor. It is very hard to understand and evaluate the pluses and minuses at first sight, but a few moves later it all becomes clear. The right move was 16.♖b1! creating a highly unpleasant pin on the b-file with which it is not easy to deal at all... 16...♕a6

(On *16...c5 17.♗a3!* is very strong and Black has no good way to protect the c5 pawn.)

17.♘c5! Again the activity is more important than the material! 17...♕xc4 18.♕xc4 ♗xc4 19.♖fc1! ♗e2

(*19...♗xa2* does not equalize. *20.♖a1 ♗e6 21.♖xa7*

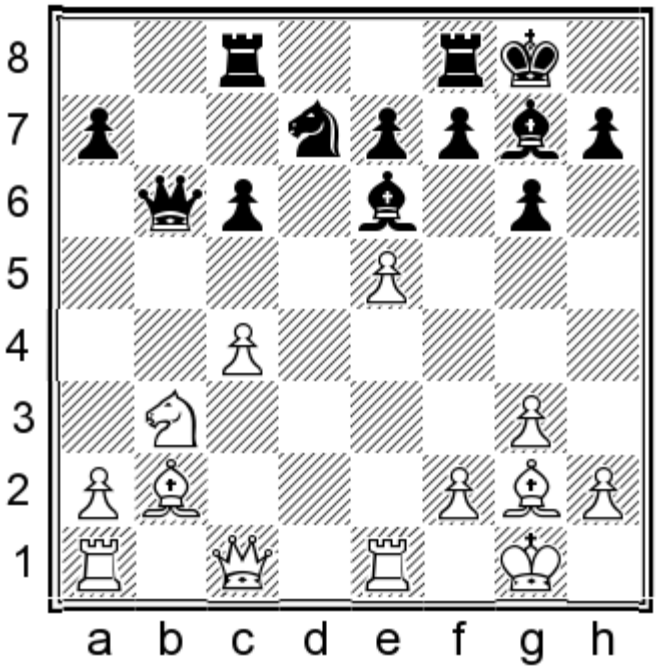


White’s pieces are too active. The e7-pawn is hanging, but the main problem is the e6-bishop with which Black can do nothing. One illustrative line is *21...♖fe8* It seems quite natural to protect the hanging pawn, but it runs into *22.♘xe6 fxe6 23.♗h3! ♔f7 24.e5! ♘d5 25.♖a3!* An extremely unpleasant maneuver! ♖f3 is coming next and the e6 pawn falls!)

20.♖c2 The light-squared bishop does not find its place on the board... 20...♗h5 White has a strong initiative and a pleasant choice. Probably the most accurate is 21.h3 threatening to trap the bishop with g4. Black’s reply is forced: 21...g5 22.♗c1! h6 23.♖b7! winning back the pawn.

16...♘d7 17.♖e1

Protecting the e5-pawn.



Knowing what happened in the game, White should have played 17.c5 but it is understandable that Ding Liren did not

want to give up his control over the d5 square... 17...♕a6 18.♕e3 ♗d5! followed by e6. Black has no problems.

17...c5!

Finally Black found his free move to push ...c5 and its effect is even greater than expected. Black has fixed the weakness on c4 and is ready to attack it with ...♕a6 and ...♘b6! Suddenly the knight on b3 becomes misplaced with no more chances to occupy the d4 or c5 squares.

18.♘d2

Black has a choice between three tempting moves and it is very hard to assess which one is the best.

18...♕a6

Consequently following the plan with ...♘b6 and putting pressure on the c4 pawn. It made sense, however, to include 18...♖b8!? 19.♗c3 and only now play 19...♕a6 This way, Black could have avoided what happened in the game. 18...♕c7!? also looks very strong. 19.f4 ♘b6 20.♕c2 ♖fd8! In this case Black just brings his pieces to their ideal squares. He is going to double his rooks on the d-file and uses the fact that the d2-knight cannot move because it is obliged to defend the c4 weakness. 21.♖ad1 ♖d7 and Black has the initiative.

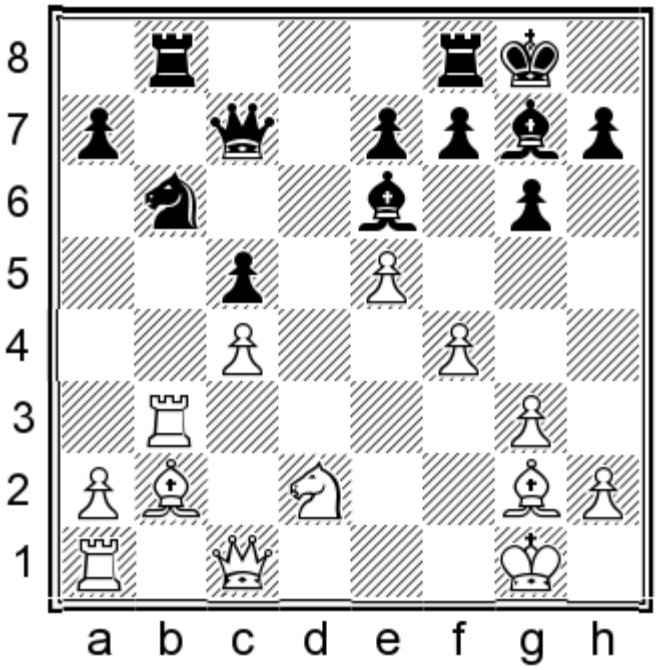
19.♖e3!

Resourceful prophylaxis against ...♘b6, which is now strongly met by ♖a3 and the queen is trapped.

19...♖b8 20.♖a3

Perhaps it was better to play 20.f4 right away? ...♘b6 is still met by ♖a3 and if Black plays ...♕b6 White will have an extra tempo compared to the game.

20...♕b6 21.♖b3 ♕c7 22.f4 ♘b6!



After some maneuvering we have reached a position similar to the tempting 18...♕c7 option. Black is going to play

...♖bd8 followed by doubling on the d-file. A well-timed undermining of the e5 pawn with ...f6 is also hanging in the air to bring the g7-bishop to life.

23.♖b1

This seems to be an inaccuracy. White can't really do anything useful on the b-file. It looked more natural to play 23.♕c2 and then bring the rook to e1, preparing to meet the ...f6 break.

23...♖bd8!

Black can leave the b-file, as the b6-knight controls it properly. The d-file turns out to be a more relevant file.

24.♗c3

24.a4 would have been a consequent follow-up, trying to invade the 7th rank. Although, in reality, Black is completely fine after 24...♖d7! 25.a5 ♘a4 and the a5-pawn becomes weak, while the 7th rank is properly secured.

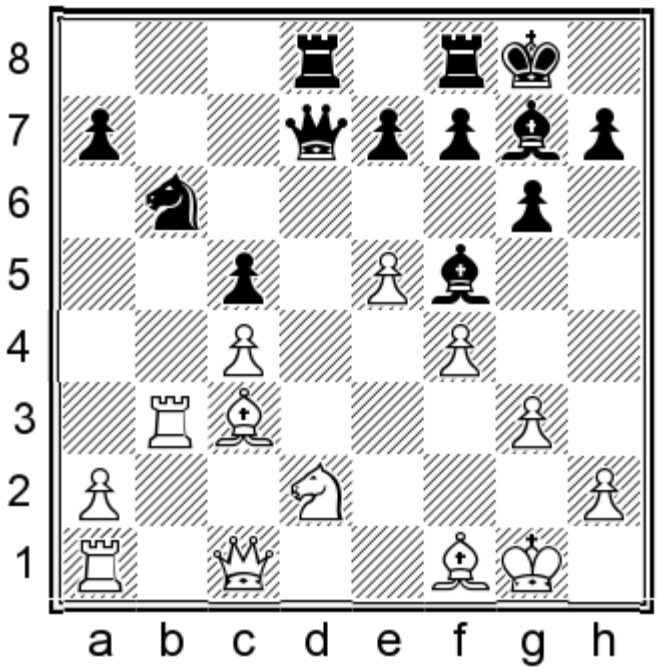
24...♕d7

Black is threatening to take on c4 now, as with his last move he prepared to meet the ♖b7 counterplay with ♕d3! 24...f6!? also looked very good 25.exf6 exf6 and Black plays ...♕f7 next, increasing the pressure on the c4-pawn.

25.♗f1

Not a nice move to make, but White had to do something about the c4 pawn. 25.♖b5 ♕d3 is also much easier to play with black.

25...♗f5! 26.♖a1



26...f6!

Here comes the freeing break! There is huge disharmony between the white pieces; the rooks are cut off from the

game; the minor pieces are just protecting each other; and the c4 pawn is very weak. These are the facts that justify that the opening of the position will favor Black!

27.exf6

Allowing Black to take on e5 and open the f-file for his rook is even worse.

27...exf6

Black is ready to occupy the e-file. Suddenly the white king becomes extremely vulnerable, as the move f2-f4 seriously weakens the king's position. Perhaps if White could pull it back to f2 he would not have any serious problems, but now he is in huge trouble.

28.♖b5

Too slow, but it is difficult to be clever. 28.♘f3 is not better, as Black has good answers here as well: 28...♖fe8 (Or *28...♗e4* followed by ♗a8 with potential threats on the long diagonal with ♕b7.)

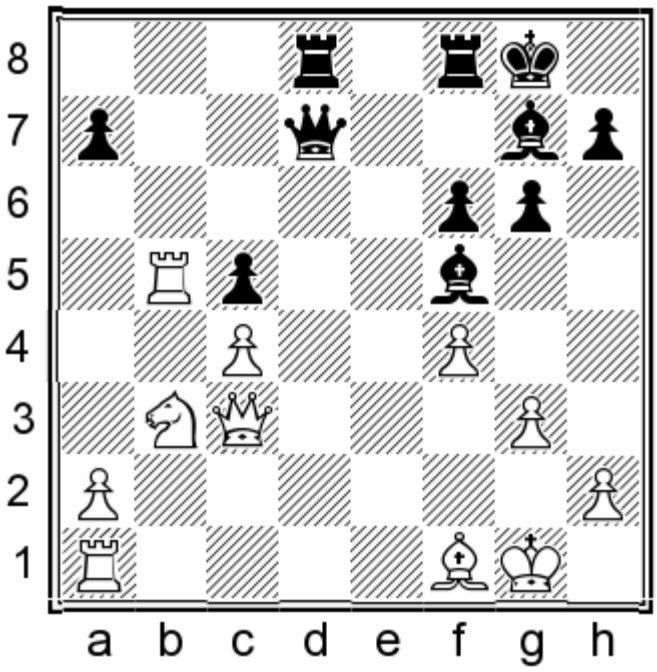
28...♘a4!

Black picks up the important dark-squared bishop after which the opening of the h8-a1 diagonal with ...f5 turns out to be decisive.

29.♘b3

29.♗a5 is not much better. 29...♕d4+ 30.♔h1 ♖de8 with complete domination -and the h1-king might get mated very soon as well, for example after ...♗d7-c6.

29...♘xc3 30.♕xc3



30...♗e4!

Of course! Black occupies one of the long diagonals and prepares to open the other one next move with ...f5! The bishop pair starts to work, and there is no way to stop them!

31.f5

Trying to lock up the g7-bishop for at least a few moves. 31.♘xc5!? would have been trickier. 31...♕c6! (It seems like Black wins on the spot with 31...f5 however it spoils the advantage because of 32.♘xd7 ♗xc3 33.♖d1! (*33.♘xf8 ♗d4#* would have been the neat point! Quite a pretty mate, we must admit!) 33...♖f7 34.♖b8! and White just holds by a miracle!) 32.♘xe4 f5! wins an exchange and the game, but it would have been worth a try , hoping that Black plays 31...f5, since Black is winning anyway in the game.

31...♕xf5 32.♖e1

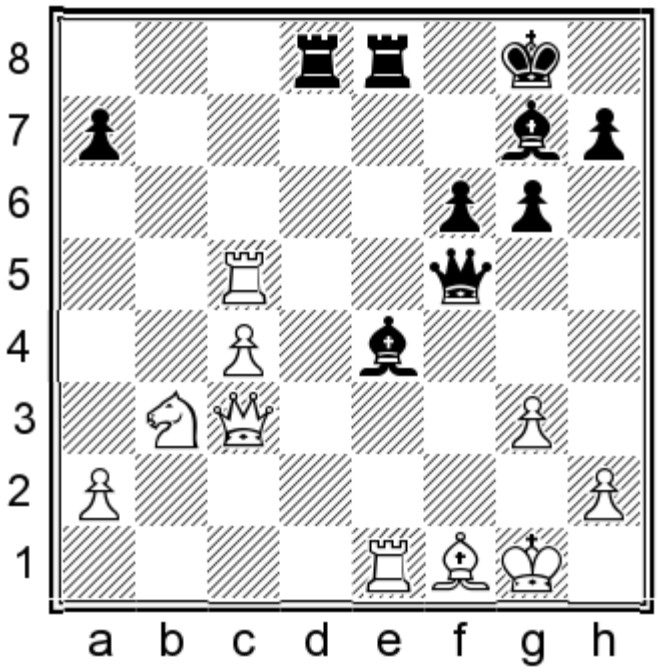
32.♘xc5 ♗c6–+;

32.♖xc5 ♕d7–+ and ...f5 next.

32...♖fe8

Caruana uses all his pieces!

33.♖xc5



33.♘xc5 loses to 33...♗c6 and White must protect the c5 knight. 34.♖a5 (*34.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 35.♖a5 ♗h6–+* and ♗e3 next wins.) 34...♖xe1 35.♕xe1 ♕f3–+

33...♕d7

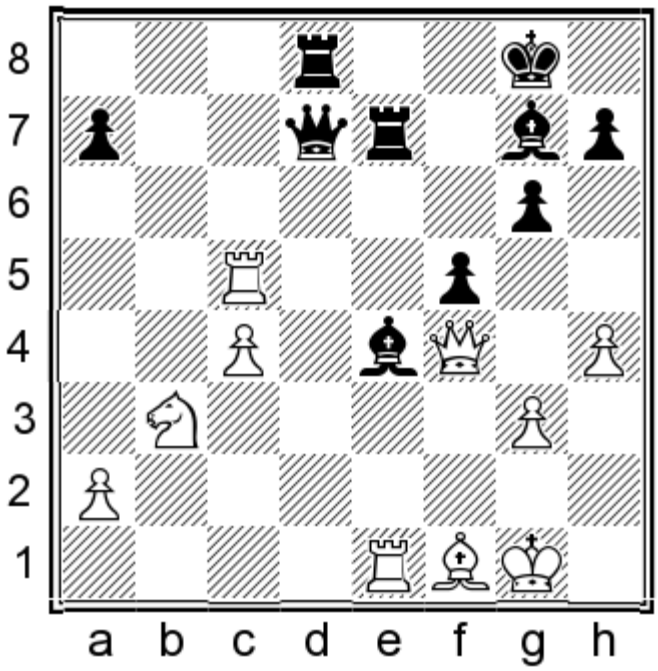
Black was in some time-trouble and quickly plays the most natural move. He is pushing ...f5 next move and the introduction of the bishop to the game decides the outcome. However, there was a brilliant win available immediately with 33...♕xc5+!! 34.♘xc5 f5 and Black wins the queen because ...♗d4 is a decisive threat. 35.♕e3 (*35.♘xe4 ♗xc3–+; 35.♕a3 ♗d4+ 36.♖e3 ♗c6–+*) 35...♗d4–+

34.♕c1 f5 35.♕f4

White desperately tries to complicate matters in Caruana's time-trouble. He would like to play ♖c7, which gets parried in the simplest way.

35...♖e7 36.h4

Giving air to the king on h2 against checks on the g1–a7 diagonal.



36...a5!!

A brilliant finish! Caruana sees that the b3-knight is the key to White's defense, else ...♗d4 is decisive. Therefore he is threatening to send it away with ...a4, and both captures on a5 lose material.

37.♖xa5 ♗c3! 38.♖d5

Desperation again! Black has many different wins here, but Caruana finds an easy one...

38...♕a7+ 39.♔h2 ♖xd5 40.cxd5 ♗xe1

A great game! It was interesting that this all happened because of the natural 16.e5 move. Sometimes one mistake like this determines the entire game...

0–1

GAME 38
V. Ivanchuk (2715)
L. Van Wely (2667)
77th Tata Steel GpA
Wijk aan Zee NED (3)
12.01.2015, [B45]

Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Ivanchuk’s games are usually fun to watch, with a lot of interesting ideas and original play, but Van Wely is also a very fighting player who has faithfully stood by his Sicilian Defence for many years. Ivanchuk appeared to celebrate his comeback in Wijk aan Zee with a fantastic start of 4/5 and we are now going to see one of these excellent victories. In the current game the position quickly becomes extremely sharp and complicated, where White clearly has the better of it, and with perfect domination by his pieces he makes Black’s play look almost funny. A great game to watch and learn from.

1.e4 c5

As expected, a Sicilian...

2.♘f3 e6

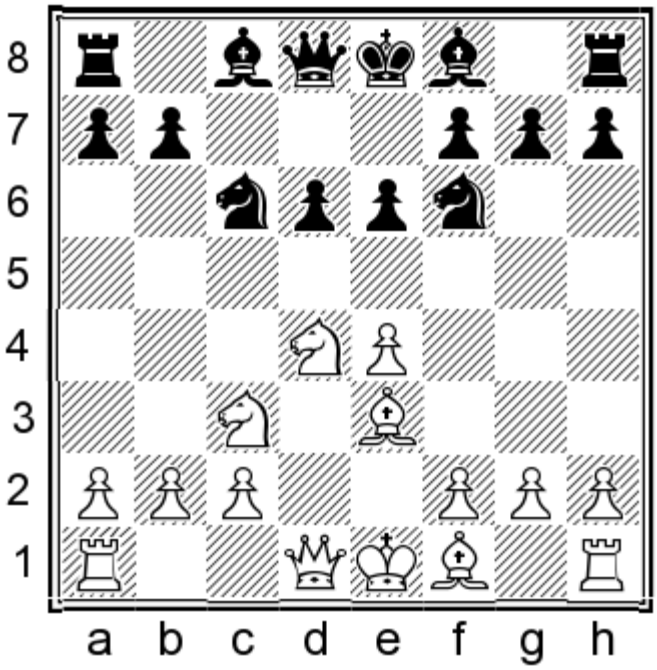
Van Wely used to play the Najdorf more often, but he also often goes for a lot of different versions of the Paulsen or Scheveningen.

3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 d6

A rare move order in recent games — usually Black goes for 5...♕c7 or 5...a6.

6.♗e3 ♘f6

In case of 7.f3 we would be back to the main lines, but Ivanchuk tries an interesting idea.



7.♕e2!?

Lately in the Najdorf it has become more-and-more fashionable to put the queen on e2 instead of the usual f4-♕f3. The queen on e2 has the advantage that White has the possibility of playing g4 and ♗g2 while at the same time ♘d5 or ♘f5 are sometimes possible as well.

7...a6

Van Wely continues with the standard set-up but an interesting try for Black would be to play 7...♗d7 and a quick ...♕a5 and ...♖c8, trying to save a tempo on the ...a6 move.

8.0-0-0 ♗d7 9.f4 ♖c8 10.♔b1

This is a typical prophylactic move which we see in many different Sicilians.

10...♕c7?!

Of course, Black could have played 10...♗e7 followed by short castling, but usually the queen is nicely placed on c7. On the other hand the ...♕c7 move is a bit slow, so in the current situation I don't think it was really needed.

11.♘b3

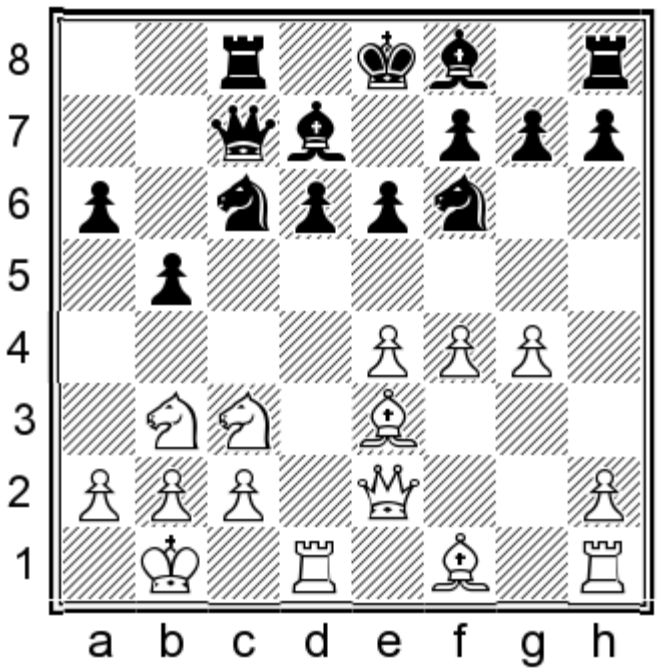
A preparation for the main idea of ♕e2: to play g4. White could have tried to play g4 immediately: 11.g4!? ♘xd4 12.♖xd4 and here 12...e5! Now we can see why Ivanchuk decided to go back with 11.♘b3. 13.♖d2 ♗xg4 Black wins a pawn, but things are far from clear. 14.♕g2 and I think Whites has excellent compensation for it.

11...b5

Once again Black plays a very standard move.

12.g4

Things are getting more direct now. White wants to play g5 next, so Black needs to act quickly.



12...b4?!

This just doesn't look right... 12...h5 doesn't help either, since after 13.g5 ♘g4 White has the cool 14.♗g1 — with the deadly threat of playing h3 next. But maybe the calm 12...h6 was the best way to continue.

13.♘a4

Not only is the pawn on a6 hanging, but White also has another idea — of playing ♘b6 — next.

13...e5?

This was, of course, Van Wely's idea when he played 12...b4?! but it just doesn't seem to work out, and in general pushing ...e5 is the wrong approach for Black.

14.g5!

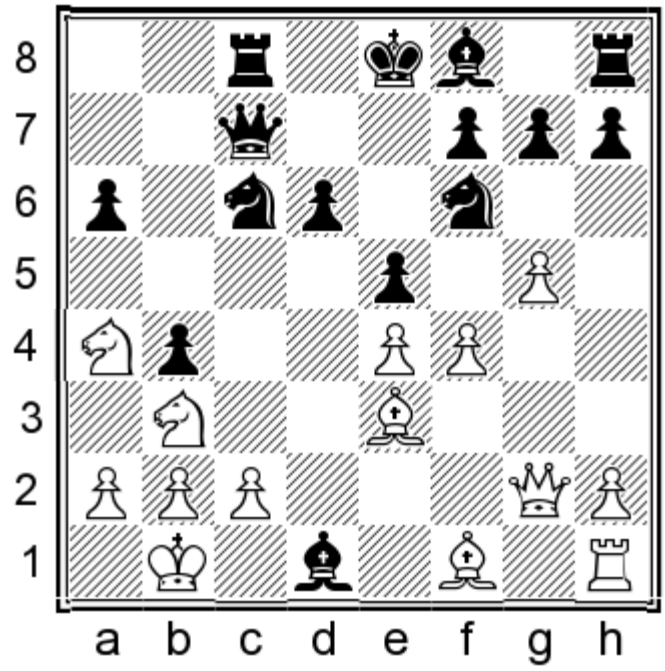
Great play by Ivanchuk. The Sicilian is a very sharp opening and needs to be played energetically! I guess Black had clearly underestimated the complications we are entering now.

14...♗g4 15.♕g2

Now we can see Ivanchuk's plan.

15...♗xd1

This move is also forced.



16.♗xa6!

This is the key move behind 14.g5, which you must see before actually playing 14.g5! The bishop on d1 is hanging, the knight on f6 as well, and the rook on c8, so it is clear that White is getting some material back- but for the moment Ivanchuk is just a full rook down. Black is fine after 16.gxf6? ♘d4! with big pressure on the c2-pawn, and a very unclear position.

16...♘d7

16...♘g4 doesn't help because of 17.♗b6! It is very rare that in a Sicilian White dominates on the queenside so much.

17...♕d7 18.♖xd1 with a winning position for White.

17.♖xd1

White is only an exchange down and he has a pawn and a great initiative, so it is clear that he is much better.

17...♖a8

A logical move, but probably already almost losing. Probably the best way to fight would have been to play 17...♖b8, but anyhow White has a great position after 18.♕e2! followed by ♕c4. We can see the massive domination by the white pieces.

18.♗b5 ♗e7

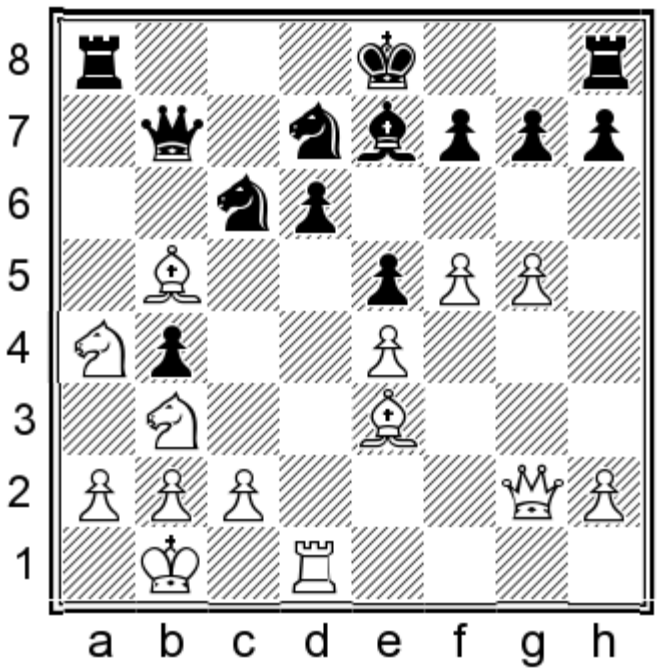
18...exf4 didn't help much, because after 19.♗xf4 ♗e7 White has a winning punch with 20.e5! and Black's position falls apart.

19.f5!

Another very good strategic decision. There is no need for White to rush things as Black has almost no play at all, and the idea of playing f6 in the right moment could be deadly.

19...♕b7

Hoping to get rid of the b5-bishop.



20.c4!

Ivanchuk plays great chess, using the fact that Black is not in good shape to play 20...bxc3, so White secures a great position for the bishop on b5.

20...0-0

20...bxc3 didn’t help either. 21.♘xc3 the white knight is taking the perfect d5 square under control. 21...0-0 22.f6 and the game is basically over. 22...♗d8 23.♖xd6 with a totally winning position for White.

21.f6

White starts the assault!

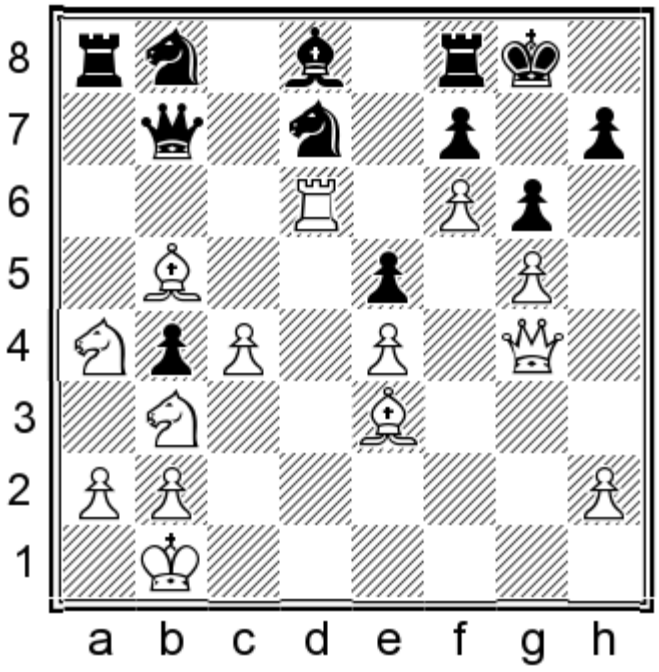
21...♗d8 22.♖xd6

and the second black pawn is gone... What an amazing domination by the white pieces! But in a few moves it will get even worse...

22...♘cb8 23.♕g4

Not the most precise way to end the game, but a very practical move. White attacks the d7-knight, which has no squares.

23...g6



24.h4

Ivanchuk starts to joke... Why not take a piece with 24.♗xd7 ♘xd7 25.♖xd7 ♕a6 26.♘bc5 White doesn’t only have a winning position, but even a material advantage. 26...♕xc4 27.♕h3 and I guess the best Black can do is to resign.

24...h5

Black is sort of fighting.

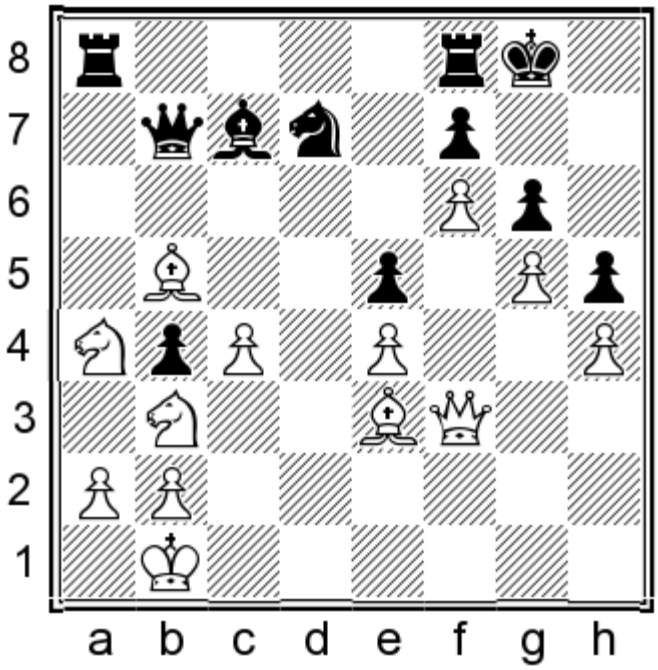
25.♕f3

and we now have a funny position where Black has no move which would not lead to a direct loss of some material. Amazing!

25...♗c7

Van Wely is still hoping for something...

26.♖xd7 ♘xd7



27.♗xd7

White has 3 pieces and 2 pawns for Black's 2 rooks — which is already a material advantage — but the really bad thing is that the white pieces are totally dominating the game.

27...♖ad8 28.♘bc5

It was surely time to resign, but Black keeps on making moves...

28...♕a8 29.♕d1

The white queen plans to take up a great position on d5.

29...♕a7 30.♕d5 ♖a8

Black can practically not move...

31.♗d2

And again Ivanchuk does not hurry, he is going for the b4 pawn! :)

31...♖fd8 32.♗xb4 ♗a5 33.a3 ♕c7 34.♘c3

The second white knight wants to take a nice position on b5.

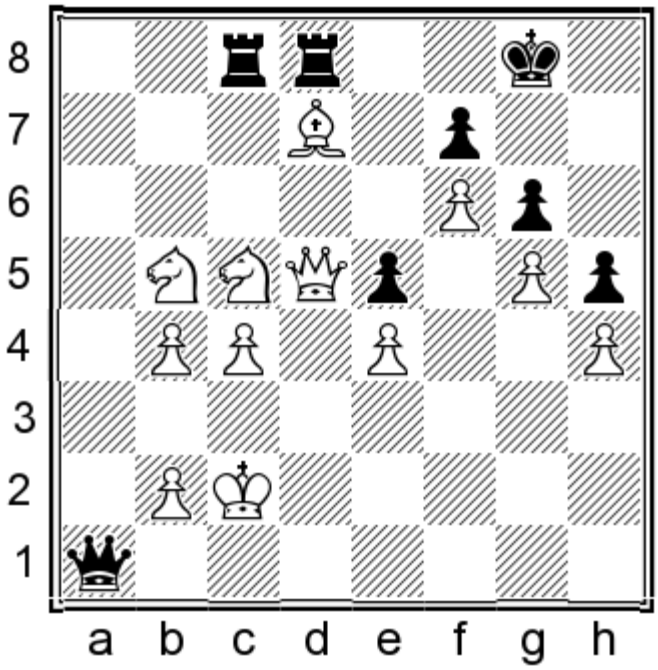
34...♗xb4 35.axb4 ♕a7 36.♔c2

and of course the white king is perfectly protected by the armada of white pawns and pieces.

36...♖ac8 37.♘b5

What a position!

37...♕a1



38.♘d6

What we can learn from this game is this really nice touch which Ivanchuk showed us with his ‘domination play’, and that usually a move like ...e5 is very wrong in the Sicilian for Black- don’t try it in your own games!

1–0

GAME 39
F. Caruana (2820)
M. Carlsen (2862)
77th Tata Steel GpA
Wijk aan Zee NED (6.4)
16.01.2015, [B31]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

A very tough battle between the current World Nr.1 and Nr.2. The World Champion manages to outplay his rival in a very complex middlegame.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5

Caruana decides to avoid the open Sicilian and plays the recently popular Rossolimo variation.

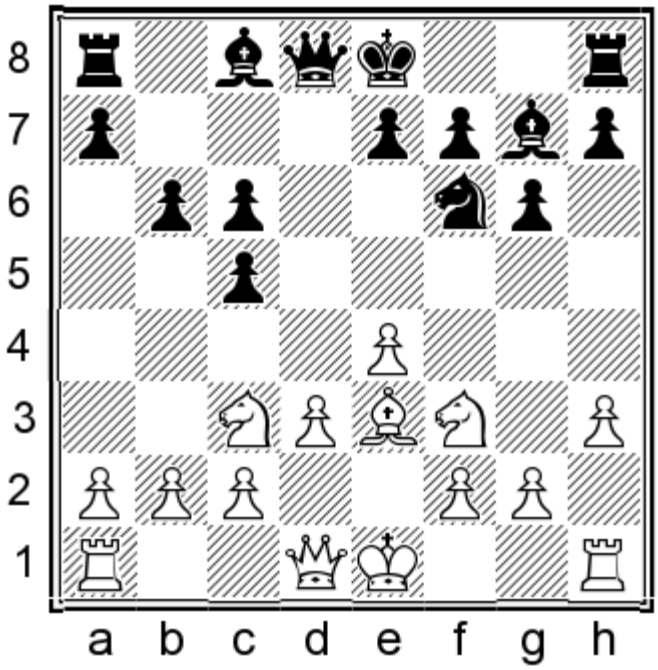
3...g6 4.♗xc6 dxc6

In this system, White gives up his bishop pair in order to inflict some damage to the pawn formation. He intends to keep the structure closed to avoid allowing the two bishops to work effectively.

5.d3 ♗g7 6.h3

This is basically the initial position, where Black has a wide range of playable set-ups.

6...♘f6 7.♘c3 b6 8.♗e3

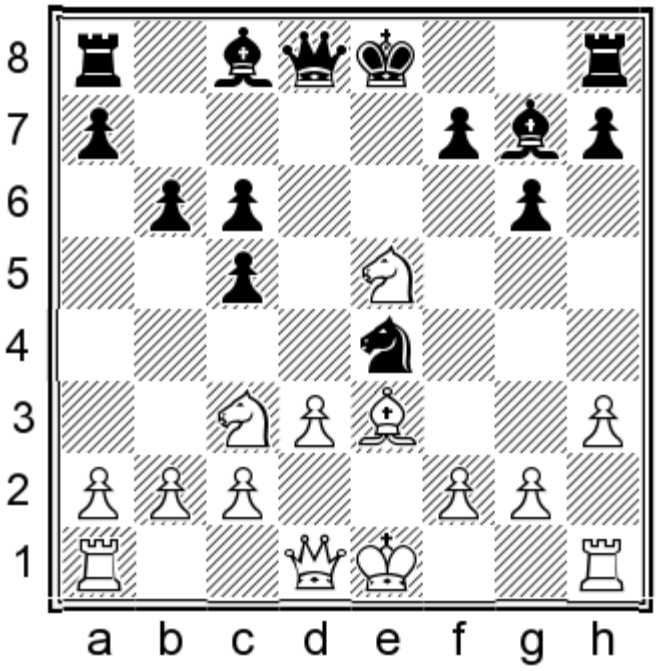


8...e5

This is practically the novelty. Well, to be honest, my personal opinion is that the World Champion mixed up something and this move is a blunder... I guess, he wanted to go for the line with 8...0-0 9.♕d2 e5

9.0-0

Refusing the challenge... Of course it is easy to understand Caruana's logic, that a sacrifice in the opening played instantly by Carlsen should be sound and he searches for an alternative to continue the game with. It would be interesting to know what Carlsen had in mind against 9.♘xe5! ♘xe4



otherwise White is just a pawn up. 10.♕f3! This is the key and suddenly the attack against the f7 pawn is very unpleasant! 10...f5

(*10...♗xe5* simply leaves Black in a bad position after *11.♕xe4 f6 12.♗f4 0-0 13.♗xe5 ♖e8 14.0-0 ♖xe5 15.♕xc6*± without sufficient compensation for the pawn.)

11.♗f4! An important move to retain the advantage.

(Black is fine after *11.dxe4 ♗xe5 12.exf5 0-0 13.♕xc6 ♗xf5* The two bishops are working perfectly now and Black should get back the c2-pawn and equalize.)

11...♘xc3

(*11...♕e7 12.dxe4 ♗xe5 13.0-0-0*± is just an extra pawn for White.)

12.♕xc6+ ♗d7 13.♘xd7 There are some complications, but White ends up being better in the end. 13...♖c8 14.♕e6+ ♕e7 15.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 16.♗e5! The last important move and White saves his extra pawn. 16...♗xe5 17.♘xe5±;

White can also play 9.♕d2 when Black does not have anything better than 9...♕d6 or 9...0-0, but both should transpose to the normal 8...0-0 variations, therefore I cannot figure out the subtle point of starting with 8...e5.

(*9...h6* is a common idea in some other lines to prevent the trade of the bishops on h6, but here it does not seem to work because of *10.♘xe5* and after *10...♘xe4 11.♘xe4 ♗xe5 12.♗xh6! ♗xb2 13.♖b1 ♗e5 14.0-0* followed by ♖fe1 with a very strong attack!)

10.♗h6

9...0-0 10.a3

A common plan in this variation. White would like to undermine the queenside with b4, which would yield him the upper hand in the center and some pressure on the a-file against the a7 pawn. 10.♘xe5 is already a different story. Black can play 10...♘xe4 and the f7-square is safe, so ♕f3 makes no sense. White should take back on e4, but then after ♗xe5 the exchange of the central pawns favors Black, because it opened up the position for the two bishops. 11.♘xc6? does not work since after 11...♘xc3 12.♘xd8 ♘xd1–+ Black takes one more piece.

10...♕e7!

Preventing b4 and protecting the e5 pawn. On 10...a5 a known reaction is 11.♘a4! refreshing the positional threat of b4, based on the new weakness on b6. 11...♘d7 parrying b4 by protecting the b6 pawn. 12.♕d2! looking in two directions. It supports b4 and also the trade of the bishops with ♗h6.

11.♕b1

A consequent continuation of the plan. It also made sense to play ♕d2 and ♗h6.

11...♘h5

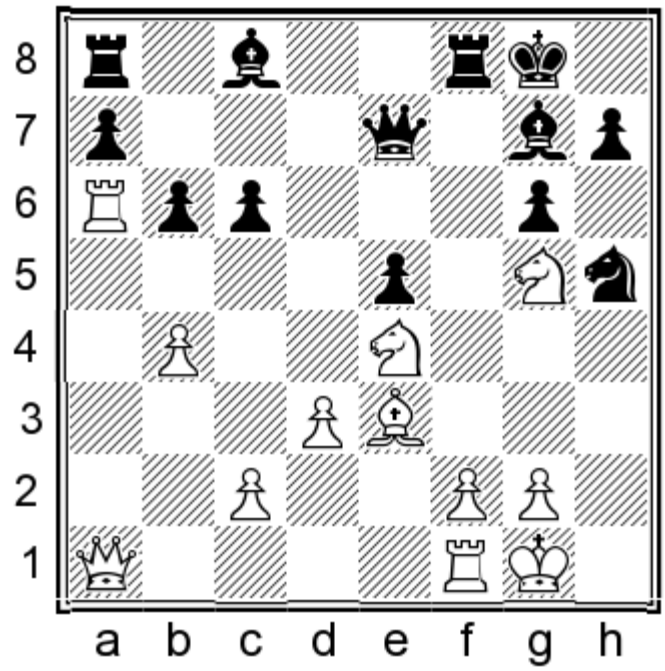
Carlsen decides to launch his counterplay on the kingside with ...f5, making use of the fact that the white queen has gone to the other side of the board. The prophylactic 11...a5!? also made sense now, because after 12.♘a4 ♘d7 it is not easy to execute the b4 break well, and otherwise the queen seems a bit misplaced on b1.

12.b4 f5

Black goes all-in on the kingside! He basically admits his positional defeat on the queenside and pins all his hopes to his attack against the g1-king. This idea is known in many lines of the King's Indian variation, but on the other hand it is quite atypical of Carlsen's style. White is better after 12...cxb4 13.axb4 threatening to take on b6. 13...♗e6 14.♖a6 f5 15.♕a1! Refreshing the ♗xb6 idea. Black should really do something now on the kingside, but it is unclear how he could break through. 15...fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♗xh3

(*16...♖xf3* is promising at first sight, but after *17.gxf3 ♗xh3 18.♖e1* the white pieces seem to cover all the threats. I don't see any adequate counterplay for the exchange.)

17.♘fg5! ♗c8



18.♗xb6! This small combination wins material for White. 18...♗xa6 19.♗c5 White just wants to take on f8 and a6, while after 19...♕b7 20.♘d6!± followed by ♕a2 check and ♘f7.

13.bxc5 f4 14.♗d2 bxc5!

There was no way back, Black had to destroy his pawn structure on the queenside and hope that the counterplay with ...g5-g4 will arrive in time. The game becomes extremely sharp now. Keeping the healthy structure with 14...♕xc5

allows White to enter a clearly better endgame after 15.♕b3+! sending the king a square further from the center. This is quite useful before trading the queens. 15...♔h8 16.♕b4! ♕xb4 17.axb4± with excellent prospects for White. He might double his rooks on the a-file, or put pressure on the e5 weakness with, let's say, ♘a4 (threatening b6), ♗c3 and ♘b2-c4.

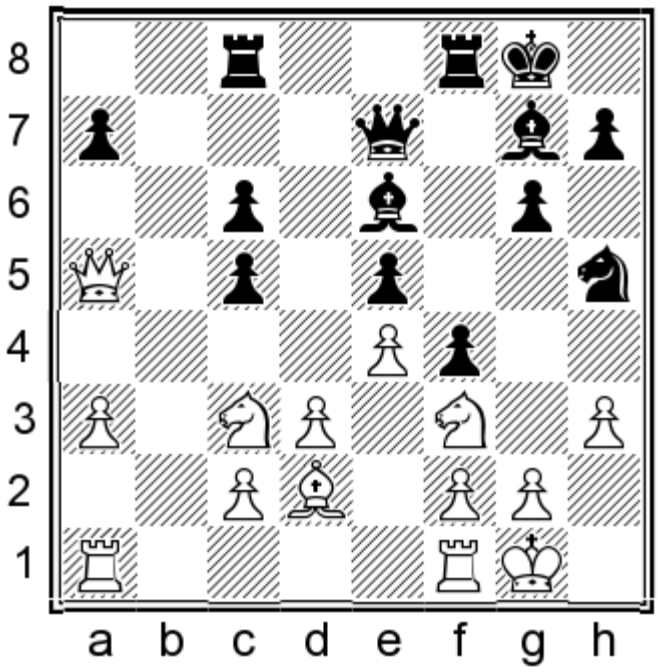
15.♕b3+

The alternative was 15.♘a4 with the idea of getting the queen to c3. Black must launch his counterplay again with 15...g5! 16.♕b3+ ♔h8 17.♕c3 (Preventing the g4 idea with *17.♘h2* is very risky. Black gets a very strong attack after *17...f3! 18.♘xf3 ♖xf3! 19.gxf3 ♗xh3 20.♖fe1 ♘f4* The white pieces are driven to the queenside; he can hardly defend his naked king like this. *21.♖ab1 ♕f6–+* The direct threat is ...♘e2 followed by ...♕xf3 with inevitable mate on g2.) 17...g4 18.hxg4 ♗xg4 and just like in the game, Black gets a very strong attack.

15...♗e6 16.♕a4

Winning the c6 pawn would give a great square for the knight on d5, therefore Black must waste a tempo before launching his attack.

16...♖ac8 17.♕a5



17...g5!

No choice! Black committed himself to this idea when he accepted doubled c-pawns. The positional alternative was 17...c4 getting rid of one of the weaknesses, but Black is still left with many others. 18.♘a4! threatening to win an exchange with ♗b4, therefore Black must play 18...c5 19.♘b2 cxd3 20.♘xd3 and ♗c3 is coming next with too much pressure on the e5-pawn.

18.♘a4

Just as in the 15.♘a4 line, preventing ...g4 with 18.♘h2 is too slow. Black's attack breaks through after the following exchange sacrifice: 18...f3! 19.♘xf3 ♖xf3! 20.gxf3 ♗xh3 21.♖fe1 g4! 22.fxg4 ♕h4–+ and Black is crushing.

18...g4 19.hxg4

White could also have started with 19.♕xc5 The queen is hanging and after the exchange the e6-bishop comes under attack, but after 19...♕f6 we will reach the game by transposition.

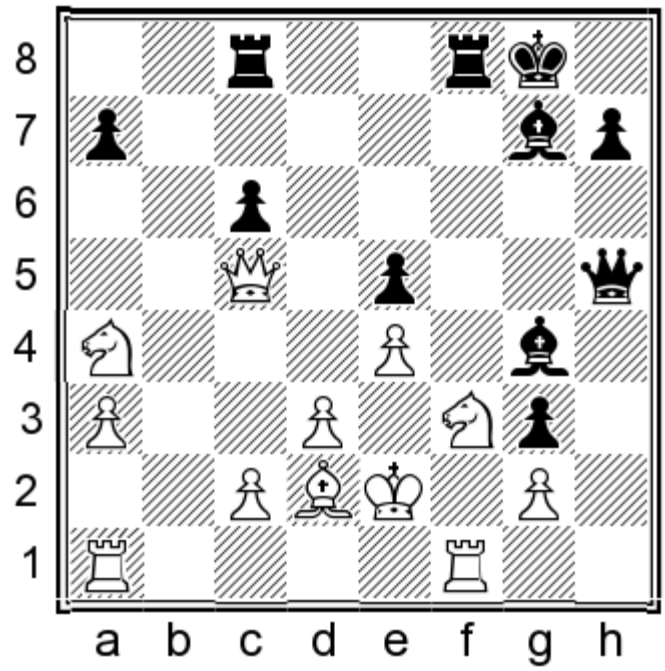
19...♗xg4 20.♕xc5 ♕f6

Caruana was already quite low on time and it is really unpleasant to face such an attack.

21.♘h2

The alternative was 21.♖fb1 with the idea of opening an escape route for the king to the center. Black must lead the attack precisely to get enough compensation. 21...♕g6 22.♔f1 ♘g3+! A spectacular sacrifice, trying to open the f-file for the rooks. 23.♔e1!

(White gets mated after 23.fxg3? fxg3 24.♔e2 ♕h5! 25.♖f1 It seems like everything is under control, but the truth is...



25...♕h2! 26.♕g1 ♖xf3! 27.♖xf3 ♗xf3+ 28.♔xf3 ♖f8+ 29.♔e2

(*29.♔g4 h5+! 30.♔g5 ♗f6+! 31.♔g6 ♕h4*–+ Mate is coming soon.)

29...♖f2+ and White must give up his queen to avoid getting mated. 30.♕xf2 gxf2–+)

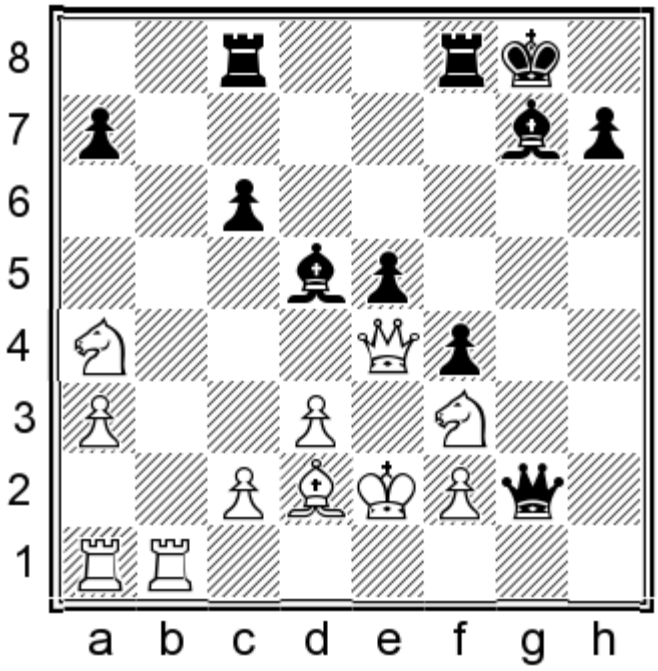
Black can force a draw here by playing 23...♘xe4!? 24.♕c4+

(*24.dxe4 ♕xe4+ 25.♔d1 ♕xa4* is the point.)

24...♗e6 25.♕xe4 ♗f5 26.♕c4+ and both sides are forced to repeat the moves.

(*26.♕e2* is too dangerous after *26...♕xg2* ♕h1, ♗g4 or e4 is coming...)

26...♗e6 27.♕e4 Black cannot play for more with 27...♕xg2? because suddenly White saves himself by playing 28.♔e2! ♗d5



29.♖g1! ♕h3 30.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 31.♕xe5++– ♖g1 is coming next and White is the one who mates first.

21...f3!

Carlsen usually plays positional games, but we can see that he plays perfectly even when it comes to tactics.

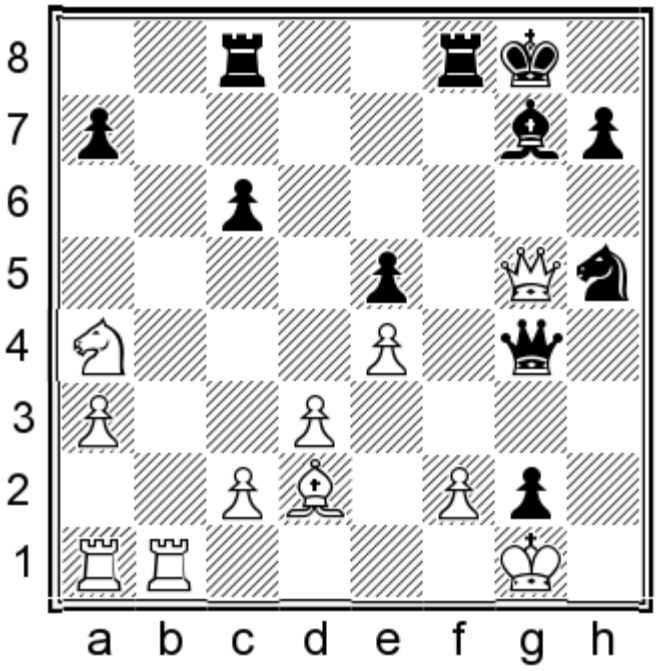
22.♘xg4 ♕g6 23.♕e7!

A nice defense! White drops the queen back to g5 to protect the g2-pawn. 23.♘e3 ♘f4–+ White cannot defend against ...♘xg2 or ...♘e2 and ...♕h5 mate.

23...fxg2 24.♖fb1 ♕xg4 25.♕g5! ♕e2 26.♕e3

The only move again!

26...♕g4 27.♕g5



A very interesting moment! As we can see, Black could repeat moves with ...♕e2, but of course with such a king on g1 one should think about more. The most natural decision would be to keep the queens on board and try to mate with ...♔h8-♖g8 somehow.

27...♕xg5!?

An extremely deep decision! Black decides not to repeat the moves, but to swap the queens off the board. He must evaluate the consequences well, because the material is balanced, he must forget about giving mate — and the g2 pawn might fall. Also, the rook might invade on b7 and the knight is also just one move away from an excellent outpost on c5. However Carlsen believes that saving the pawn on g2 with ...♘f4 will give him chances to continue playing for the win. It was quite natural to play something like 27...♕f3?! 28.♕xg2 ♕f7 keeping the queens and intending to mate with ...♔h8-♖g8. However the counterplay comes very fast: 29.♘c5 ♖c7 (*29...♔h8 30.♖b7* is also good for White!) 30.♔h1! ♔h8 31.♖g1± White is a pawn up and he seems to consolidate.

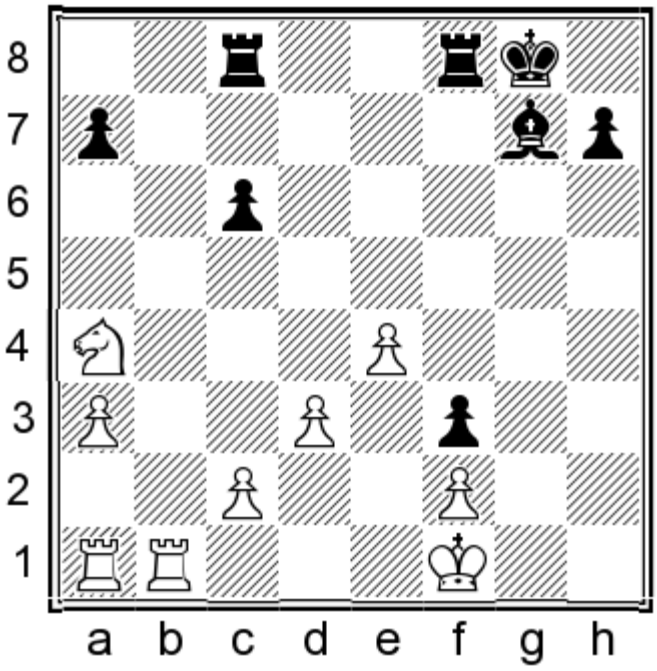
28.♗xg5 ♘f4 29.♗xf4?

The decisive mistake. Caruana blunders by missing Black's 31st move! White should have parried the ...♘h3 threat by playing 29.♔h2 Black then has the option to force a repetition with 29...♗f6 (Or he can continue pushing with *29...h6 30.♗h4 h5* with the idea of ♗f6-♗g3 and h4! White is just in time to play *31.♖g1! ♗f6 32.♗g3* Black must lose a tempo on moving with his king, because after ♗xf4 exf4 the g2 pawn is hanging with a check. *32...♔f7 33.♖ae1* and White holds, because he is ready to take on f4 and g2 as the a1 rook is not hanging anymore.) 30.♗h6! It is important not to allow the rook to the h-file. 30...♗g7 31.♗g5

29...exf4 30.♔xg2

30.c3? f3–+ followed by ♖f4-h4 is over.

30...f3+ 31.♔f1



31...♖f4!!

An amazing move! Black does not grab the exchange, but saves his bishop to help in different kind of mating ideas against the white king. It is a bit shocking, but White cannot avoid getting mated. The automatic move for most players would have been 31...♗xa1 32.♖xa1 and start to think here. The game is about even — White plays ♔e1–d2-e3 and brings his knight back to the game via c5. ♖h1 perfectly stops the h-pawn and the e-pawn might give him excellent counter-chances. The f3-pawn is also quite weak, or at least it is quite bad for Black to pin one of his rooks to the protection of that pawn..

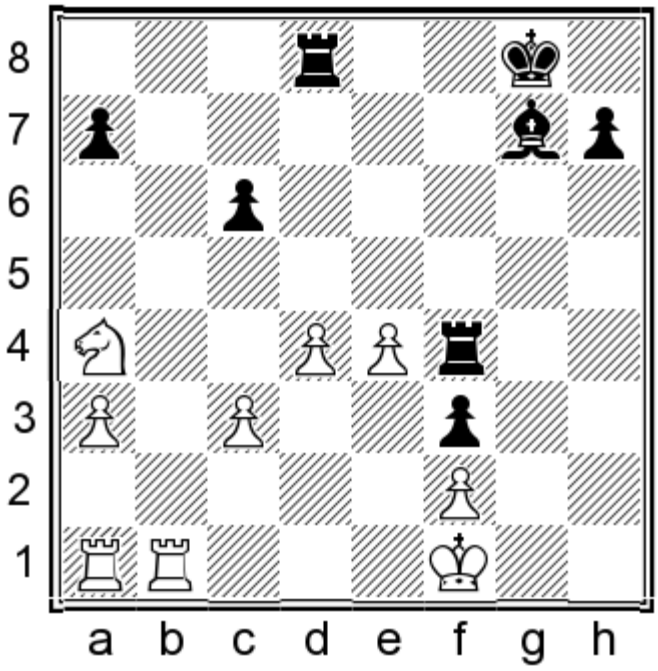
32.c3

The alternative 32.♔e1 does not help. Black prevents the ♔d2 idea by playing 32...♖d8!! This is the very subtle point of the previous move and Black continues to haunt the king with ...♖h4! since ♔d2 is now met by ...♖xe4! 33.♘c5 (*33.♔d2 ♖xe4 34.♘c3 ♗h6+ 35.♔d1 ♖h4–+* and mate is coming next! In such positions we can see that the bishop is better than the a1-rook, but still it is very hard to refrain from grabbing the exchange.) 33...♗c3+ 34.♔f1 ♖h4 35.♔g1 ♔h8–+ and ...♖g8 is coming with mate.

32...♖d8!!

The same idea as in the 32.♔e1 line. Black cuts the white king from his escape route to the center of the board by attacking the d3-pawn.

33.d4

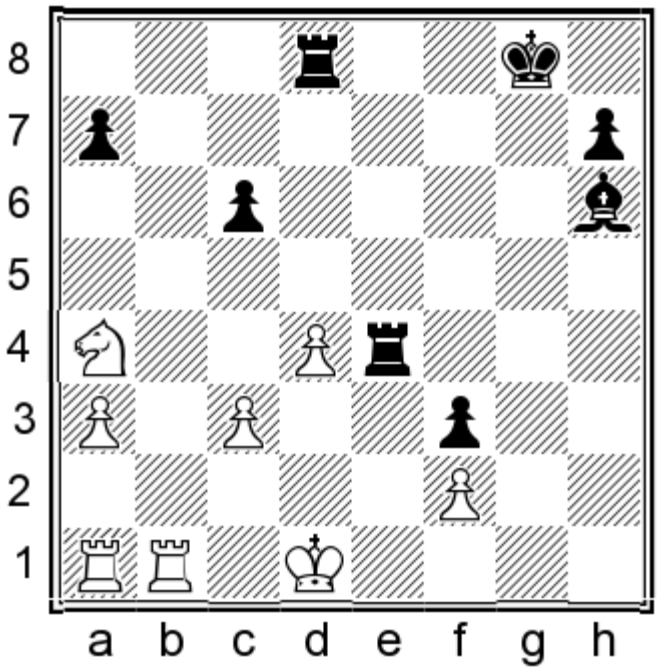


33.♖d1 loses to 33...♖h4 34.♔e1 (*34.♔g1 ♖d6*–+) 34...♗h6!–+ and mate on h1.

33...♗h6

This is also good enough, but... an even more beautiful win would have been 33...♗xd4!! 34.cxd4 ♖h4 35.♔e1 (*35.♔g1 ♔h8*–+) 35...♖xd4–+ and mate on h1!

34.♔e1 ♖xe4+ 35.♔d1



35...c5!!

Extremely powerful play! One mistake would let the advantage slip away, but the most direct move always deprives

White from consolidating and getting his rooks into play. On the direct 35...♖e2 36.♖b2 holds.

36.♔c2

36.♘xc5 is already met by 36...♖e2 and Black penetrates on the 2nd rank. 37.♖b7 ♖de8–+ ♖d2 is threatening mate in 2.

36...cxd4 37.♔d3 ♖e2 38.c4

38.cxd4 also loses to 38...♖d2+ 39.♔c3 ♖2xd4 40.♘c5 ♗g7–+ The king is just too weak...

38...♖xf2

It was slightly more precise to send the king towards the center first with 38...♖d2+ 39.♔e4 ♖xf2–+

39.♖d1

White could have prolonged his loss for a while by trading rooks: 39.♖b2 ♖xb2 40.♘xb2 but of course the outcome is not in question... 40...♖b8 41.♖g1+ ♗g7 42.♘d1 (*42.♔c2 ♖e8*–+) 42...♖b3+–+

39...♖e2

White resigned! A very exciting game!

0–1

GAME 40
F. Caruana (2820)
M. Vachier-Lagrave (2757)
77th Tata Steel GpA
Wijk aan Zee NED (13.2)
25.01.2015, [B90]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

A great piece of preparation with a deep positional pawn sacrifice, followed by great play in the middlegame and an exact finish — this is what Vachier-Lagrave will do to Caruana in the last round of Wijk ann Zee to share second place. A fantastic game to watch!

1.e4 c5

Vachier-Lagrave mainly plays the Najdorf.

2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.h3

This ‘silent’ move is becoming more-and-more popular. Already in a previous round here Caruana played 6.h3 against Hou Yifan and actually did not get much out of the opening. Later on the game went crazy and both had winning chances. The idea of 6.h3 is of course to play g4 next and then ♗g2. Of course a move like 6.h3 won’t be the reason people will stop playing the Najdorf, but it is a tricky move and it is not that simple for Black to prove that White is not better.

6...e5

Of course, in case you are a true Najdorf player, you are playing the ...e5 move, as in case of a move like ...e6 we would be back to the Scheveningen, which is of course also a possible choice for Black.

7.♘de2

White wants to play g4 now followed by ♗g2 and ♘g3, with a clearly better position.

7...h5

and of course Black prevents White from doing it. We are still in one of the main-lines which is often played at the high levels.

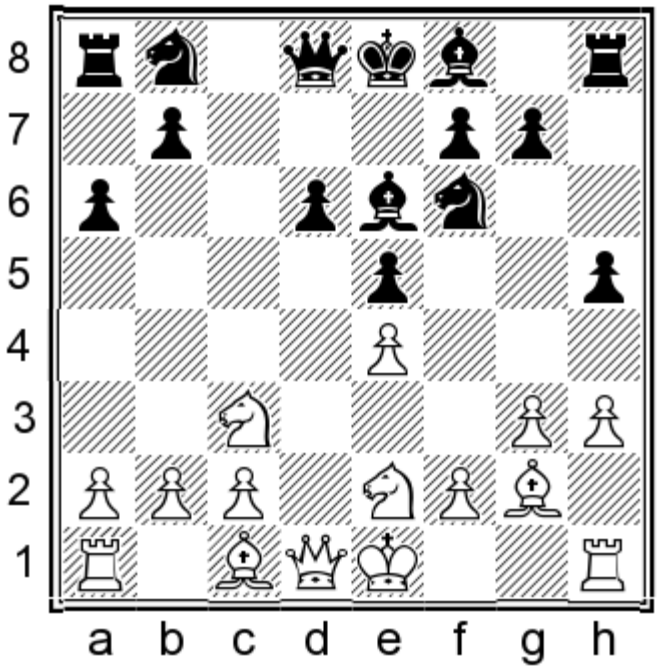
8.g3

Caruana played this against Hou Yifan and continues playing it. Another main-line here is 8.♗g5 followed by f4.

8...♗e6

Sometimes Black can play the position without ...♗e6, and instead with ...♘bd7-b5.

9.♗g2



9...♘bd7

Black is not revealing for the moment whether he wants to play ...b5 or not. In my opinion it is too early for the ...b5 move: 9...b5 10.a4! A very typical move for this kind of position. 10...b4 11.♘d5 and I think White is slightly better.

10.a4

Caruana probably wasn't sure if ...b5 is already a threat or not. Usually the a4 move is of course the right choice, as White's play is normally on the queenside.

10...♗e7 11.0-0 ♖c8

The beginning of a great idea which was clearly Maxime's preparation. Black does not castle, but keeps the idea of ...h4 and an attack on the white king in mind.

12.♗e3

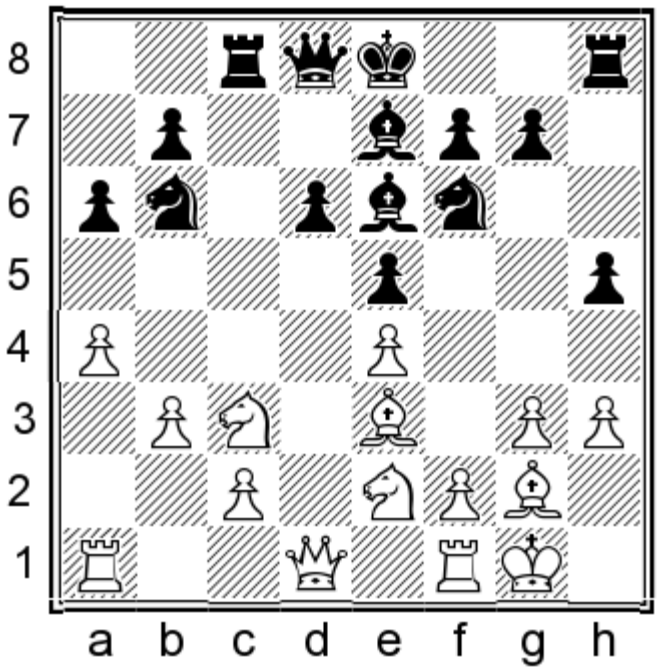
It is hard to blame Caruana for playing the most natural move, but this move gets him into trouble... White could have played the safer 12.b3 with a very complicated position.

12...♘b6

Of course a move like ...♘b6 can only be played with a connection to playing ...♘c4 or ...d5 next, otherwise it doesn't make sense.

13.b3

A logical move. White should not let the black knight into c4 and naturally a move like 13.♗xb6 would be a big positional mistake.



13...d5!

What great preparation by Black. At first sight this move makes no sense as White is going to be a full pawn up, but if we look a bit more closely into the position, we discover that Black will have excellent compensation and actually the position is very hard to play for White.

14.♗xb6

White doesn't have a choice. After 14.a5 d4 Black is just better. 14.exd5 ♘bxd5 also leads to a better position for Black.

14...♕xb6 15.♘xd5

This is probably also the best move for White. To leave the knight on c3 under the attack of the c8 rook doesn't make much sense. 15.exd5 ♗f5 and Black is going to have great play on the c-file.

15...♘xd5 16.exd5 ♗d7

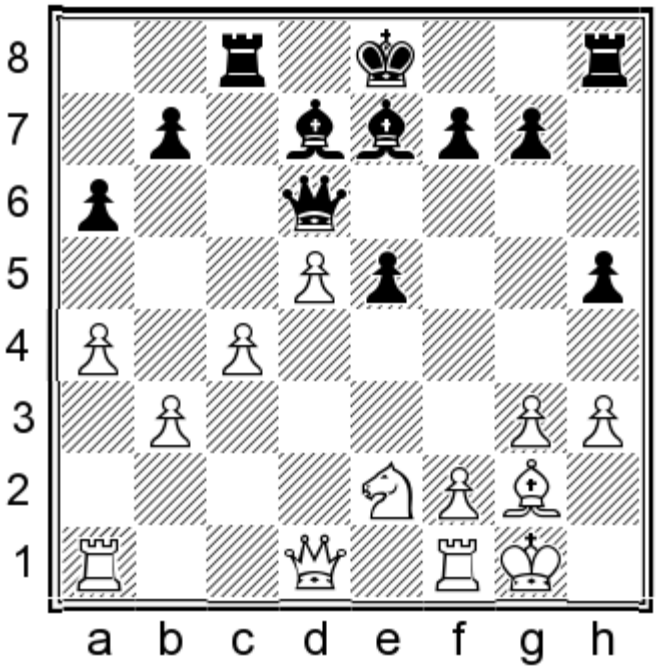
So, let's take a fresh look at the position. White is a clear pawn up but Black has the bishop pair and some chances to create an attack on the kingside. Of course White can't be worse here, but the position is very dynamic and every move counts. White's idea should be to create play on the queenside as quickly as possible, to make use of the extra pawn, and Black will try to get his play rolling on the kingside.

17.c4

This move just can't be a bad one.

17...♕d6

Black places his queen on the right spot and prepares to play ...h4 or maybe ...f5.



18.a5?!

The right positional choice, but it already looks too slow. White should have done something about Black's counter chances on the kingside. Maybe a move like 18.♕d2 with the idea of playing 18...f5 19.h4 would have been a possible option and the position would have remained very complicated.

18...f5

Now ...h4 is already a dangerous threat.

19.♕d3

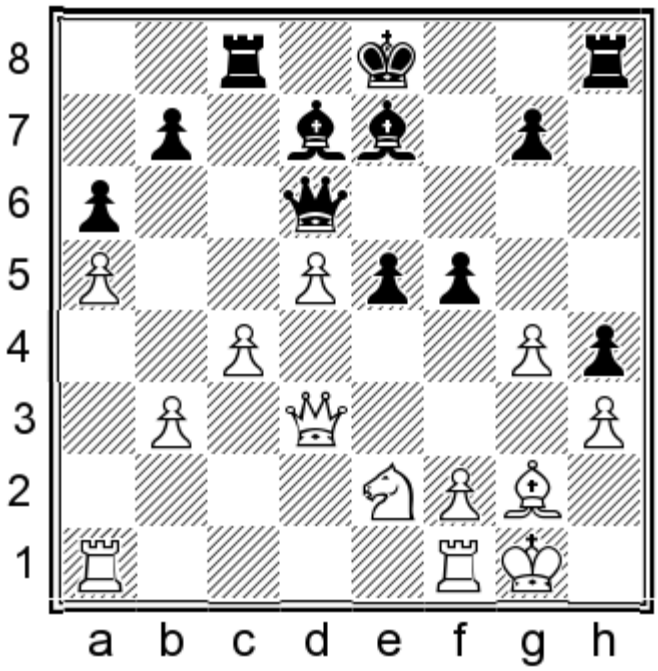
Another strange-looking move, but it is not that easy to find a move for White. In the event that White would try to stop Black's play with 19.h4 then 19...g5 20.hxg5 h4 and I would not like to be White here.

19...h4

Of course. Black is trying to open the position as much as he can, especially since all the black squares are under the Frenchman's control. It is strange that White has done nothing wrong during the last 3 moves but his position is already very dangerous.

20.g4!?

An interesting pawn sacrifice. White tries to change the dynamic of the game and win control over the white squares. To wait for Black to play ...hxg3 is not a great option...



20...0-0!

Black doesn't care about the g4 pawn and prefers to target the white king's position with all he has. Perhaps Black could have played 20...fxg4 21.♘c3 0-0 with probably also a better position, but the move in the game is at least equally strong.

21.♘c3?!

and this move almost loses the game. White should have gone for the following very dangerous move: 21.gxf5 ♗xf5 22.♕d2 and of course Black is going to attack the white king hard, but it is still more-or-less unclear how the game would end. White's idea could be to just play ♔h1–♖g1 and maybe ♘c3 later and try to keep things together.

21...e4!

A strong move. Black gets to White's king via the dark squares.

22.♕e3 ♗d8

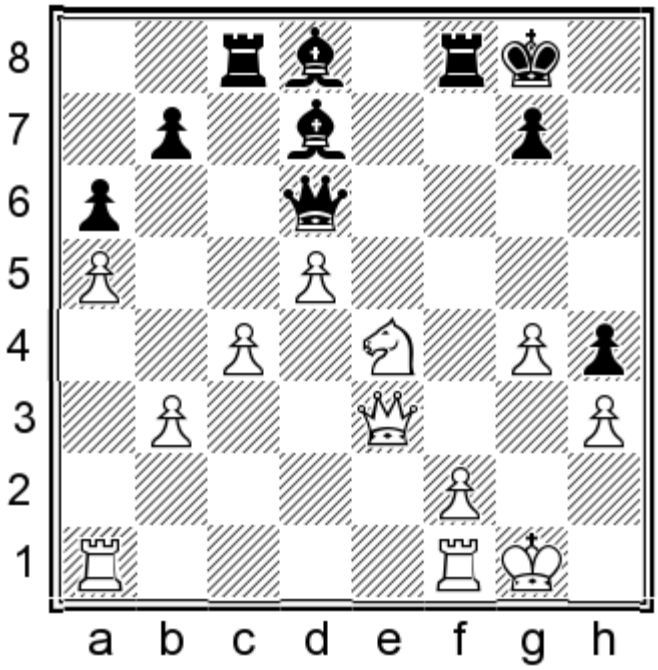
Black wants to play ...♗c7 next, followed by ...♕h2 with a mate likely. White is helpless against this simple plan, so Caruana tries entering a bad endgame...

23.♗xe4

A hard move to make, but what else should White have done?! In case of 23.♖fe1 ♗c7 24.♔f1 ♕h2 I don’t see how White could escape the mate here...

23...fxe4 24.♘xe4

White has 3 pawns for a piece and a nice knight on e4, but it is clearly not enough to say the position is equal. Black’s bishops control the entire board and White has a lot of target points in his structure. Black’s advantage is obvious here.



24...♕f4

Another exact move from Black. There is no reason to give White a chance to play f4.

25.♕xf4 ♖xf4 26.f3

White attempts to fix the pawn structure and close the position.

26...♗e7

Black is ready to play ...♖cf8 and also to get a nice position for the bishop on b4.

27.♔f2

Now the game will end quickly. 27.♔g2 was a tougher move, but after 27...♗b4 28.♖f2 Black also has at least a few good plans. One of them is to play ...♖cf8 followed by ...♗e8-♗g6, kicking out the knight from e4, and the other plan could be to prepare the ...b6 move at a good moment, to gain play down the b-file. I think Black’s position should be close to winning here.

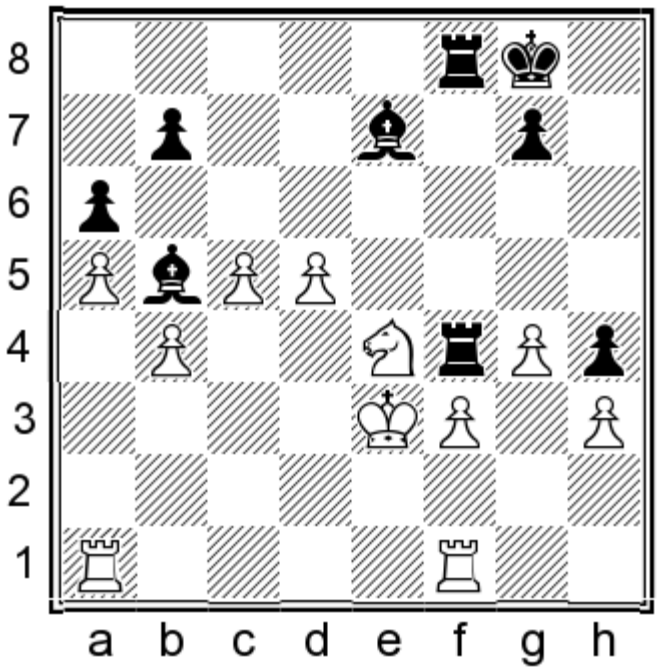
27...♖cf8 28.♔e3 ♗e8!

A strong move which was not particularly hard to find. Black wants to play ...♗g6 next.

29.c5 ♗b5

The most accurate move again...

30.b4



30.♖f2 ♖xe4+! 31.♔xe4 ♗xc5 and White is immediately lost.

30...♖xe4+!

A nice way to end the game by force!

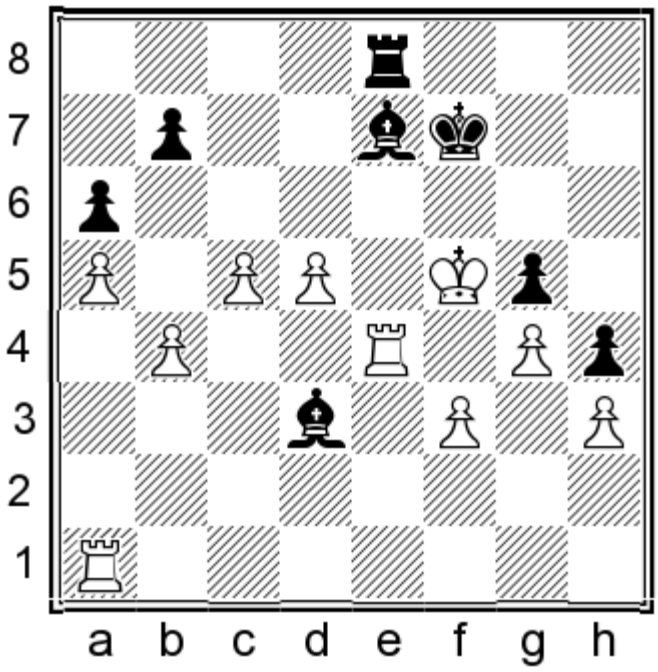
31.♔xe4 ♖e8!

Black now has different mating ideas combined with just winning some material. The game is totally over.

32.♔f4 g5+ 33.♔f5 ♔f7

with the idea of ...♗d3 mate next.

34.♖fe1 ♗d3+ 35.♖e4



35...♗f6

and mate on the next move! A great game by Vachier-Lagrave where we can see how dangerous control over the squares can be, even when one is a pawn down.

0–1

GAME 41
B. Jobava (2696)
S. Mamedyarov (2759)
Tbilisi FIDE Grand Prix
Tbilisi GEO (5)
20.02.2015, [A01]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

The latest results of Jobava have been anything but great, and after a very bad event in Wijk aan Zee he continued playing in the same way in the Grand Prix, often going for irrational openings combined with overly-aggressive play. This might work in an open tournament, but when you are playing against the best in the world usually such play gets punished. Anyhow, in the current game, after a very strange opening, Black got at least equal play, but maybe he wanted too-much too-quickly and Mamedyarov took a risky decision. The game got very hectic but Black seemed to keep a clear advantage, until Mamedyarov made a blunder which allowed Jobava to get on top. A funny game to watch...

1.b3

Well...

1...♘f6 2.♗b2 g6

Personally I like this setup for Black a lot.

3.♘c3

To play 3.♗xf6 is of course not an option. Black would just be better.

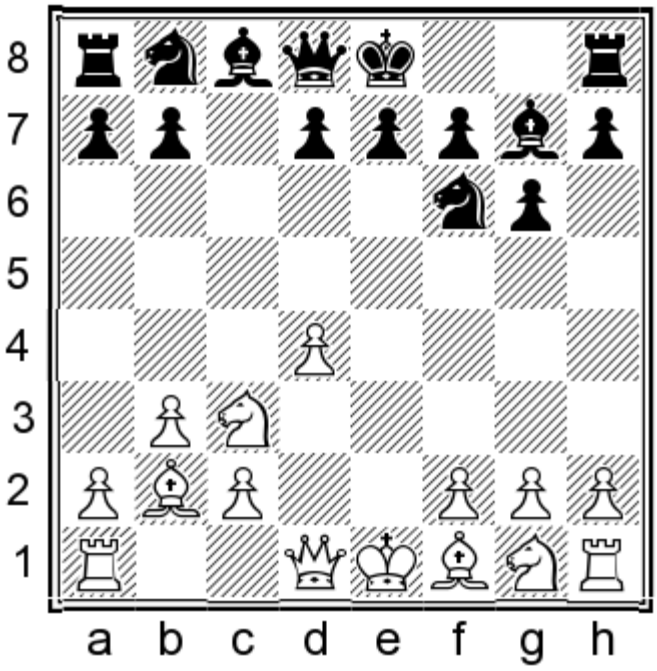
3...♗g7 4.d4

Baadur had already played a few games with this setup, which looks very strange to me. What is the idea of putting the bishop on b2 and then playing d4? I don’t get it...

4...c5

Black uses the fact that White cannot take on c5 because of ♘e4.

5.e3 cxd4 6.exd4



6...d5!

A very good move -now the bishop on b2 is “dead”.

7.♕d2

White is planning to castle queenside- what else to do?!

7...♘c6 8.0-0-0 ♕a5

This move looks a bit too rushed to me. Why not immediately play 8...♗f5 with the idea of just ...0-0 and doubling on the c-file? Perhaps ...♕a5 will be a useful move in the future, but perhaps not...

9.f3

preparing the g4-push and protecting the e4-square.

9...h5

preventing g4 and sometimes ...♗h6 could be a threat.

10.♔b1 ♗f5

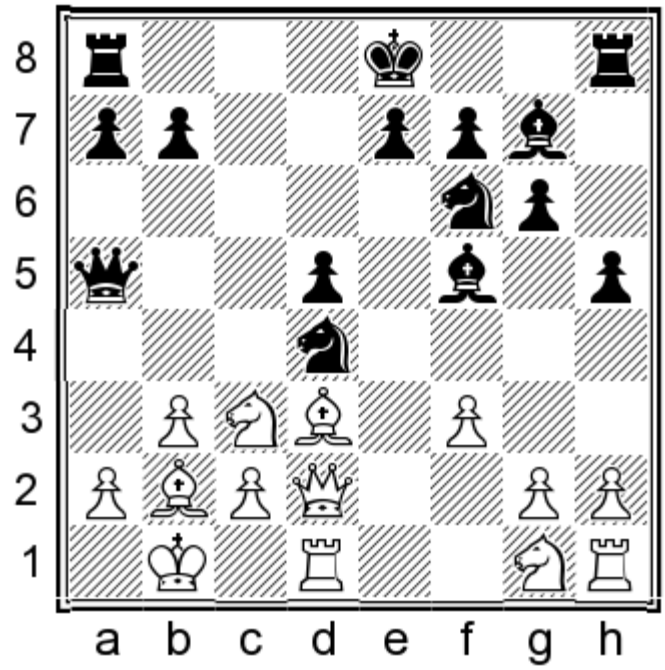
Black wants to play ...♘b4 next.

11.♗d3!?

A very good practical decision. White decides to sacrifice a pawn and get an active position, rather than playing a move like 11.a3?! and being clearly worse — after for example ...0-0 followed by ...♖fc8.

11...♘xd4?!

A very principled move, but there was no reason for Black to play it.



After the simple 11...♗xd3 12.♕xd3 0-0 Black's position is at least equal and I would clearly prefer to be Black here.

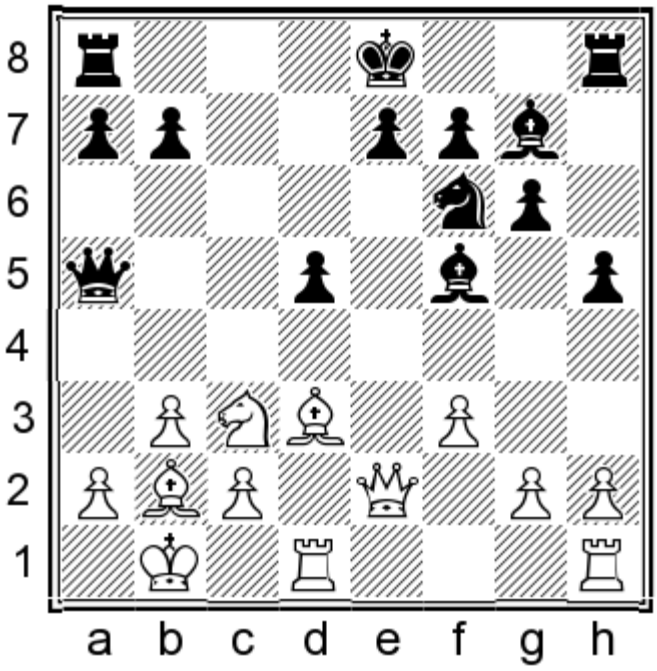
12.♘ge2!

Maybe Mamedyarov underestimated this strong answer from White, but on the other hand White had nothing else to play. In case White tries to recover the pawn with 12.♗xf5?! ♘xf5 13.♘xd5 Black has the strong answer 13...♕xd5! entering a clearly better endgame. 14.♕xd5 ♘xd5 15.♖xd5 ♗xb2 16.♔xb2 ♘e3 17.♖d2 ♖d8 and this endgame looks very unpleasant for White.

12...♘xe2

Another option for Black seems to be 12...♗xd3, but now White can play for the initiative after 13.♘xd4 ♗a6 14.♖he1 All the white pieces are in the game, the black bishop is badly placed on a6 and the position is very unclear.

13.♕xe2



13...♗d7!

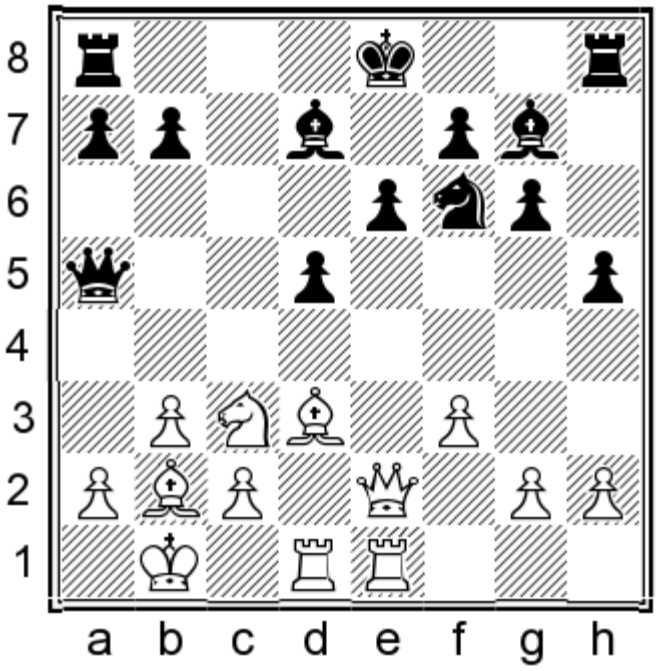
An excellent move by Mamedyarov! The black bishop will be passive on d7, but it will hold everything together. 13...♗xd3 14.♖xd3 and White is threatening to play ♘xd5 next.

14.♖he1

Typical Jobava! All or nothing... White could have chosen a safer way by playing 14.♗b5!? ♗xb5 It seems like Black doesn't have anything better. 15.♕xb5+ ♕xb5 16.♘xb5 and Black cannot hold the d5-pawn. The position is around equal, for example after the simple 16...0-0, and the game would probably result in a draw in this endgame.

14...e6

It looks like Black's position is protected, but Jobava of course had something in mind before playing 14.♖he1.



15.♗xg6!?

Not very good, but very inventive play! The position is extremely crazy now.

15...fxg6

Of course Black has to take the piece.

16.♘xd5

This is also the only move.

16...♘xd5 17.♗xg7

So, where to put the rook now?! On g8 or h7?

17...♖g8?!

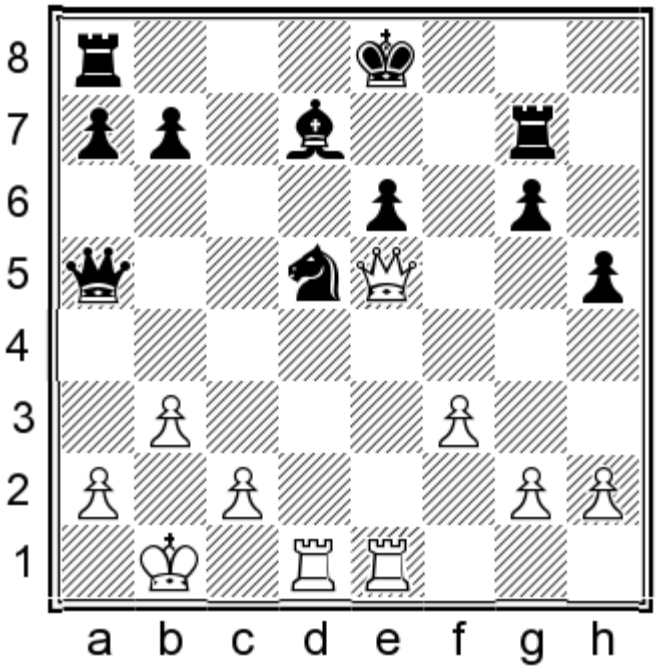
Maybe Mamedyarov stopped being serious about the game or maybe he just miscalculated something, but I cannot understand why he didn't go to h7. It seems like the right choice was 17...♖h7! and if White tried to do same as in the game 18.♕e5 Black now has the very strong 18...♔f7!! and the black king can escape to g8 after 19.♖xd5 ♕xd5 20.♕f6+ ♔g8 — and this was all made impossible in the game.

18.♕e5

is probably White's best chance.

18...♖xg7?

This is already a blunder. Black had several good options here:



A very hard move to play was 18...♔f7 19.♖xd5 We enter a long forced line now. 19...♕xd5 20.♕f6+ ♔e8 21.♕xg6+ ♔d8 22.♕f7 ♔c7 23.♖e3! Of course Black always has ♖xg7 or other options, but for a human such a position can look very dangerous and unclear. 18...♕c7! seems to be very strong. 19.♕b2 (*19.c4* just leads to a lost endgame. *19...♕xe5 20.♗xe5 ♘e7* and I don't see any hope for White.) 19...0-0-0! The only move, but it is very strong. 20.♗e5 ♕a5 and maybe White has some play for the piece, but I think his position should be close to lost in the long-term.

19.♖xd5!!

Black had clearly missed this counterblow... 19.♕xg7 was losing on the spot as after 19...♘c3+ 20.♔b2 ♘xd1+ 21.♖xd1 0-0-0 White has no compensation at all.

19...♕b4

controlling the f8-square and keeping an eye on the e1-rook.

20.♖d6

preventing the black queen from joining the defense.

20...♔f8

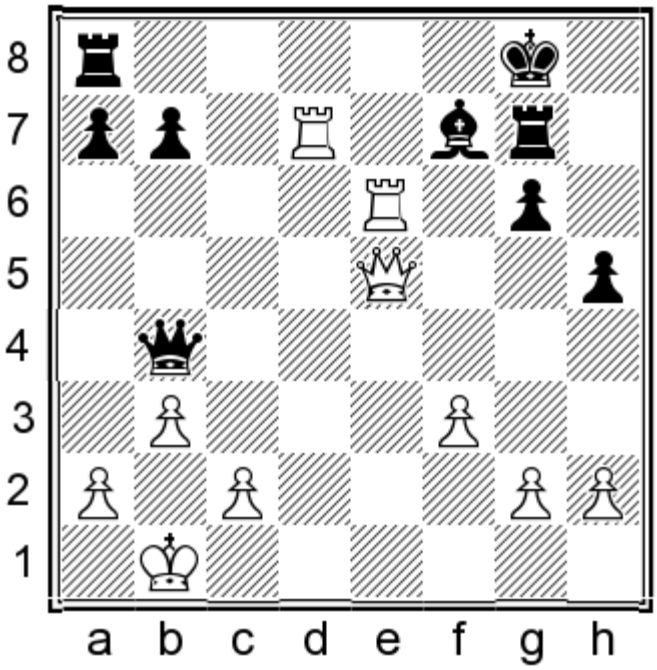
Another only move.

21.♖ed1

The very tempting-looking 21.♖e4 doesn't bring much either. 21...♕b5 the only move. 22.♕d4 ♗e8 23.♖exe6 with a very unclear position.

21...♗c6?!

Another unlucky decision... 21...♗e8 looks much tougher. 22.♖xe6 ♗f7 23.♖d7 ♔g8 Black wants to play ...♖f8 next and it seems like everything is okay, but White has the amazing



24.♖xf7! ♔xf7 and again White needs to find 25.♕d5!! which is very difficult during a practical game. 25...♔f8 26.♖e4 and because of his dangerous attack, White has good winning chances.

22.♖1d4?

and White gifts the game back... 22.♖d8+ was winning. 22...♖xd8 23.♖xd8+ ♗e8 (*23...♔e7* loses to *24.♖d4*; Maybe what both players missed is that after *23...♔f7* White needed to find *24.c3!!* The black queen cannot keep control over both the f8 and f4 squares any longer. *24...♕e7 25.♕f4+ ♕f6 26.♖f8+ ♔xf8 27.♕xf6+* and White is easily winning.)

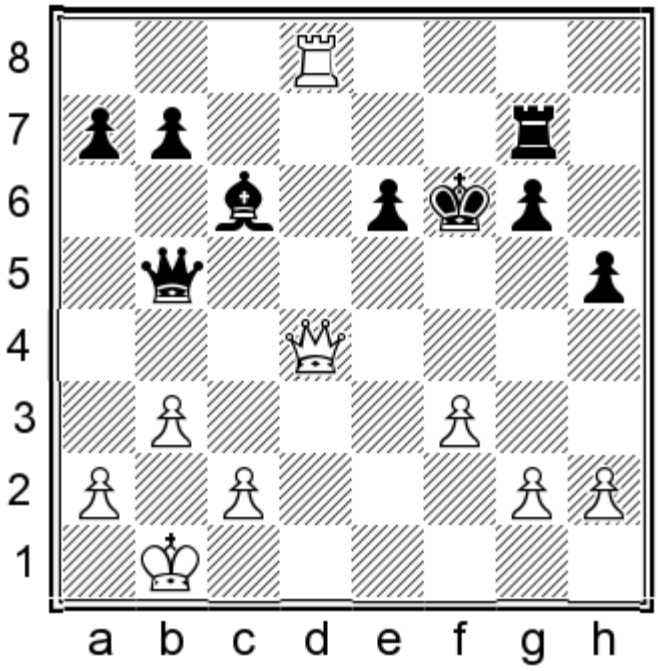
22...♕b5

The right move.

23.♖d8+ ♖xd8 24.♖xd8+ ♔e7 25.♕d6+

The position seems to be a draw now...

25...♔f6 26.♕d4+



26...♔f7??

and Mamedyarov is the last one to blunder. After the correct 26...♔e7 27.♕d6+ (If White wanted too much with *27.♖h8?* Black wins after *27...e5! 28.♕d8+ ♔e6* and the black king is perfectly safe on e6.) 27...♔f6 and this seems to just be a draw.

27.♕f4+

Now the game is just over.

27...♔e7

followed by mate with 28.♕f8. A very exciting game, even though it had quite a few mistakes in it, and clearly a very important point for Jobava!

1–0

GAME 42
V. Zvjaginsev (2658)
B. Bok (2587)
Aeroflot Open A 2015
Moscow RUS (3.11)
29.03.2015, [C44]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

Vadim Zvjaginsev has always been a very resourceful player, with extraordinary imagination in unusual positions. He is also known for his creative opening play...

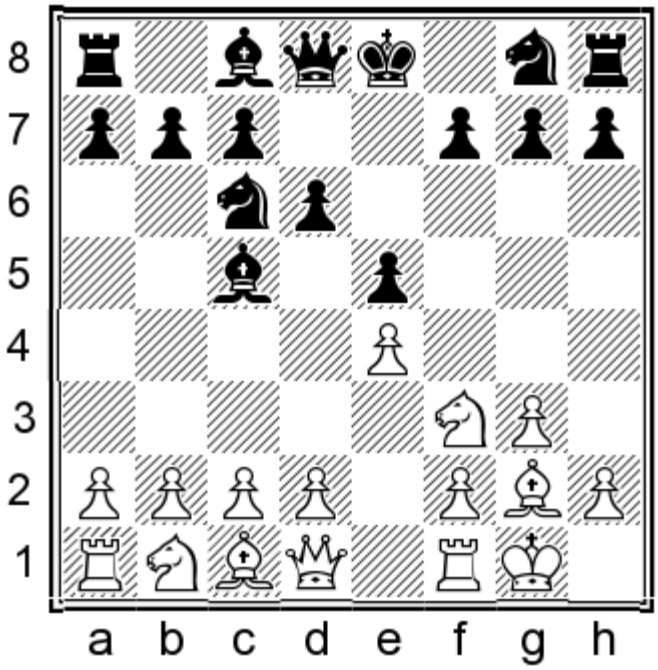
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.g3

Obviously this move cannot create real problems for Black, it rather aims at avoiding a theoretical battle.

3...♗c5

Black keeps the structure closed. An alternative is 3...♘f6 attacking the e4-pawn and after 4.♘c3 or 4.d3 d5 leads to a completely different game.

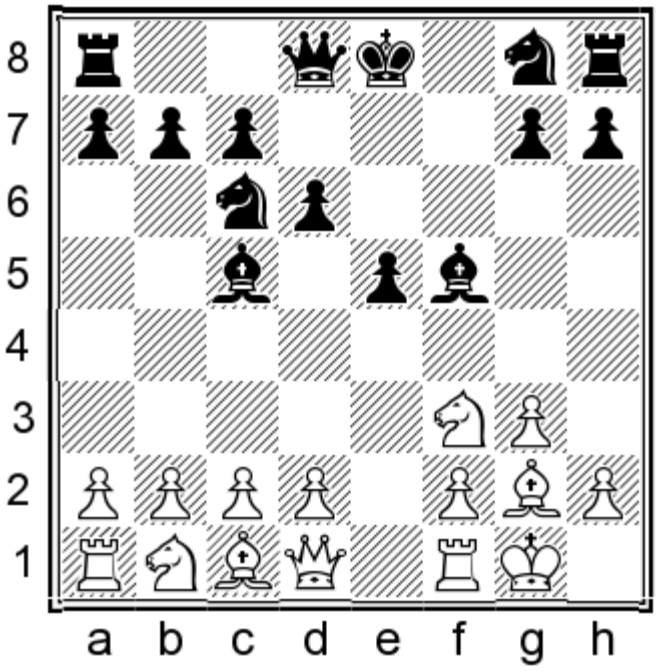
4.♗g2 d6 5.0-0



5...f5

A highly ambitious move. The point is that in positions with ...♘f6 and ...0-0, a standard idea is to play something like ...h6 and ...♘h7 followed by ...f5. Black would like to execute this plan, but in a much better version because he is saving 2 tempi. The drawback is clearly that Black opens the center too quickly, while his king is still in the middle of the board. White has two moves to make use of it, otherwise Black develops with ...♘f6 and ...0-0 and he is completely fine. More normal was to finish development with 5...♘f6 and ...0-0.

6.exf5 ♗xf5

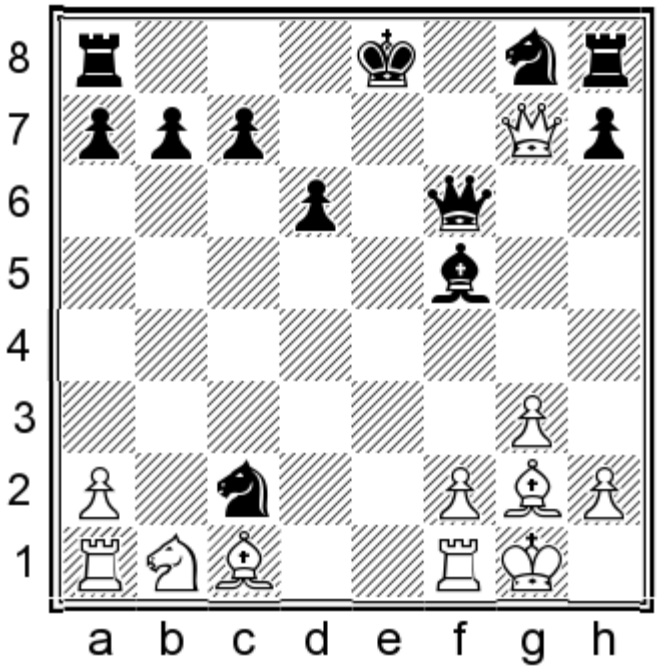


7.b4!!

A brilliant resource and extremely creative play! Zvjaginsev follows the principle that he must open the center to the king. He wants to play d4, but first he lures one of the minor pieces to b4 in order to make the real plan more effective.

7...♗xb4

It is important to keep the knight on c6 to keep the position together. It protects the e5-square after White plays d4. The black pieces become much more confused after 7...♘xb4 8.d4! This is a position which is impossible to calculate before 7.b4, one must have the intuition that White's compensation should be more than enough. The following lines seem to confirm it. 8...♘xc2 (*8...♗b6 9.dxe5 ♘xc2 10.♘h4!* This is a recurring motif in this game. The bishop does not have a square to protect the c2-knight from and after *10...♘xa1 11.♘xf5* it is clear that things will end up badly for Black. The king faces an enormous attack and the knight is also trapped in the corner. There is a nice line after *8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♗xd4 10.♕xd4 ♘xc2 11.♕xg7 ♕f6*



It all looks perfect for Black. He manages to trade queens and the a1-rook is caught, but suddenly the dark-squared bishop becomes a hero. *12.♗b2! ♕xg7 13.♗xg7 ♘xa1 14.♗xa1!* taking the knight first and the rook remains trapped on h8.) 9.dxc5 ♘xa1 10.♗b2 ♘c2 11.♘h4! The same idea again. The bishop cannot defend the c2-knight anymore. An attempt to replace it with the queen, for instance 11...♕d7, is refuted by 12.c6! bxc6 13.♘xf5 ♕xf5 14.♗xc6++–

8.d4 ♘ge7

Black must focus on quickly finishing his development. 8...exd4 9.♘xd4

9.c3!

It is important to open the diagonal to b3 and a4 for the queen. This is the only way to gain some direct benefits before Black can castle.

9...♗a5 10.d5

The alternative 10.♕b3 to prevent castling also looks pretty interesting, although after 10...♕d7 with the idea of ...♗e6 11.dxe5 d5 followed by ...0-0, Black seems to be alright.

10...♘b8 11.♕a4+ c6

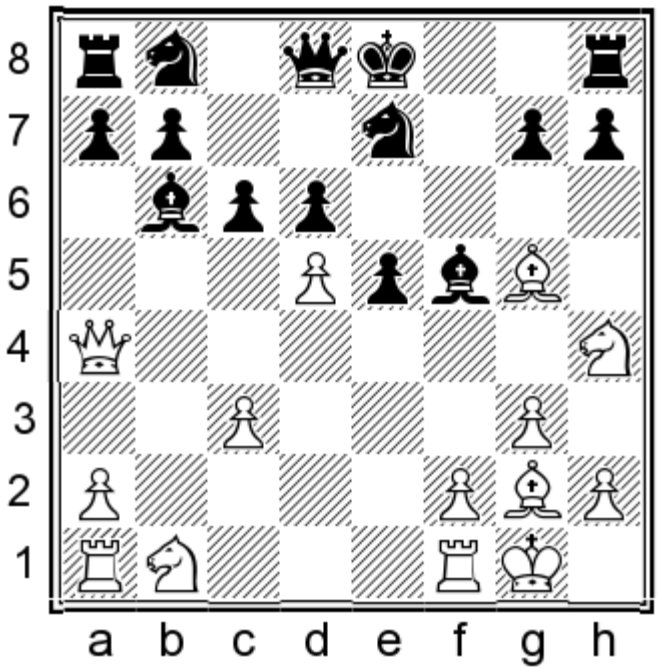
Black saves the piece, but he critically weakens his pawn chain, which allows White to organize his counterplay.

12.♗g5!

Developing with tempo and pinning the knight. Black must delay castling another move, because White could take on e7 and then on a5.

12...♗b6 13.♘h4

Very concrete chess! White wants to achieve the maximum as long as the king is still on e8.



13...0-0

Finally Black castles, but losing the light-squared bishop is a very sad scenario for him. The power of the g2-bishop is increased hugely by this and the pressure on the c6 pawn increases even further. But of course Black is still a pawn up, since the 7th move... 13...♗d7 could have been met by 14.♕b3! keeping the king in the center. White could strengthen his position with ♘d2-c4. 14...c5? locks the position and lets Black castle next move, but this move is a positional disaster after 15.♘a3! and ♘c4. The black pieces and his pawn structure are just terrible.

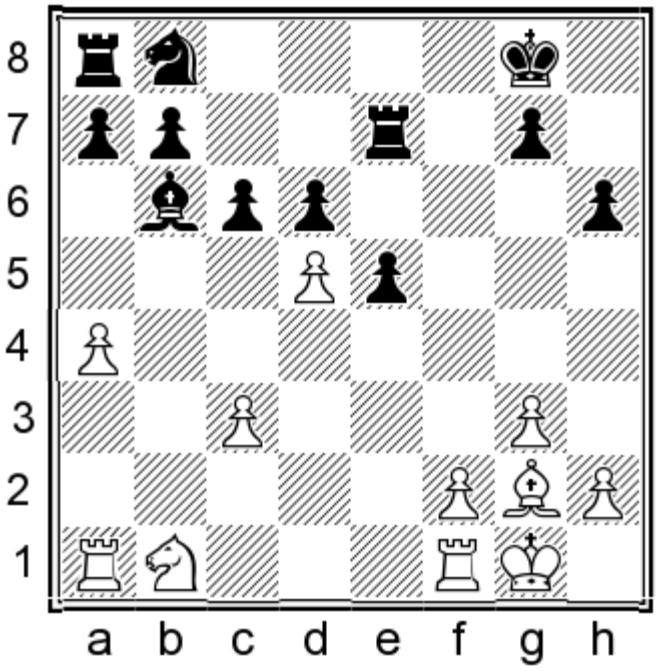
14.♘xf5 ♖xf5 15.♕h4

The most natural move to keep the annoying pin alive, but perhaps it was not objectively the best. The simple 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♘d2 seems to give White a pleasant edge. Black has difficulties with finishing the development of his queenside. The only way to do it is by giving back his extra pawn 16...♘d7 but now he ends up in a worse position after 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♕xc6 ♖af8 19.♘e4. The e4 knight is extremely strong. It attacks the target on d6 and protects the weakness on f2.

15...♖f7 16.a4

Another natural positional move! White would like to weaken the light squares with a5-a6. 16.♘d2 h6 17.♗xe7 ♕xe7 18.♕xe7 ♖xe7 will lead to more or less to the same as the game after a4. ♘c4 is answered by ♗c5.

16...h6 17.♗xe7 ♕xe7 18.♕xe7 ♖xe7



It is a huge relief for Black to finally unpin himself and simplify the position a bit, but the danger is far from over... His queenside is still undeveloped and he is very vulnerable on the light squares.

19.a5 ♗d8

Too passive. Black should have played 19...♗c5 20.♘d2 Black should not suffer anymore and return his extra pawn for further simplifications... (Black was probably afraid of *20.a6* but actually he holds after *20...b6!* and on *21.dxc6* ♖*c7* Black has just enough time to take on c6 and leave from the pin with his a8 rook.) 20...♘d7! 21.dxc6 bxc6 22.♗xc6 ♖c8 23.♗d5+ ♔f8 24.♘e4 White seems to still be in control, but after 24...♘f6! Black trades the knights and he should be able to hold the draw with the opposite-colored bishops.

20.♘d2!

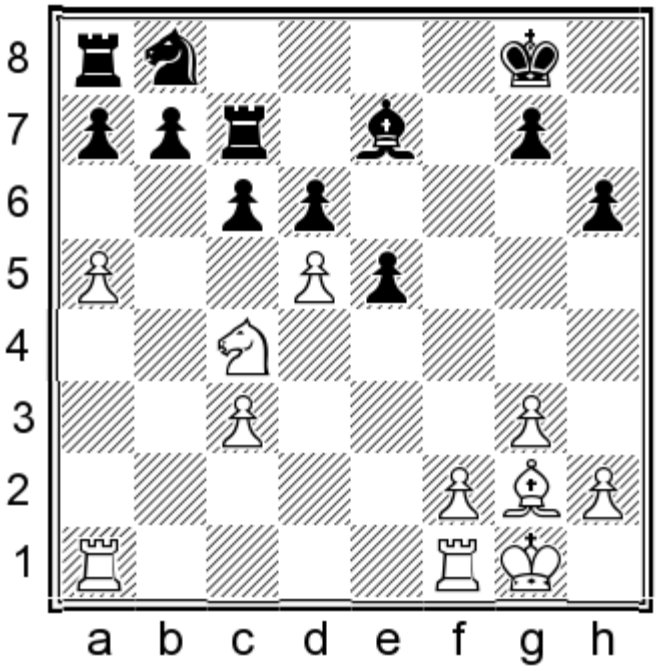
Black probably underestimated this simple positional move. White delays playing a6, intending instead to improve his position with ♘c4, ♖fb1 and only in a better moment to push a6. On the direct 20.a6 Black had planned to reply with 20...c5! which is why he did not play his bishop to c5 on the previous move. White still has very nice compensation after axb7 ♖xb7 and ♘d2, but it is not the same as in the 13...♗d7 line, because the position has been simplified a lot!

20...♖c7

Black protects his c6-pawn in order to develop his b8-knight! 20...a6 21.♖fb1 is also unpleasant.

21.♘c4 ♗e7

Black wants to protect everything, but he blunders to a beautiful idea...



21...♘a6 was the only move, although White has a clear plus here as well. 22.♘xd6±

22.♘b6!!

This fantastic tactical blow finishes the game right away! The rook is trapped on a8.

22...axb6 23.axb6 ♘a6

23...♖xa1 24.bxc7+– and White promotes to a queen next move.

24.dxc6 bxc6 25.♖xa6

Finishing the game in style! Black resigned in view of 25.♖xa6! ♖xa6 (*25...♖cc8 26.b7!*+–) 26.bxc7 ♖a8 27.♖b1+– and ♖b8 next. (Or *27.♗h3*+– The 7.b4 and 22.♘b6 moves were really adorable.)

1–0

GAME 43
W. So (2788)
A. Giri (2790)
Vugar Gashimov Mem 2015
Shamkir AZE (1.5)
17.04.2015, [A10]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

A fight between these two youngsters is always very interesting, especially since both players are very different. Giri, who has been on the top already for a couple of years now, is a very safe player with HUGE preparation, often playing forced lines with some interesting idea in them. Wesley So is very different. His rise to the Top 10 just came recently after showing amazing results, but his latest tournament, the US Championships, went anything but successfully.

Wesley is also usually well-prepared, but he plays much more creative and fighting chess than Giri, often trying to outplay his opponents in unclear position. In the current game, I guess both players were quickly out of the book

because of the very strange opening, where So clearly outplayed his opponent and basically rushed through Black's defensive lines...

1.c4 g6

Sometimes the move order can be tricky, especially if some player wants to avoid the Gruenfeld.

2.e4

I guess So wants to avoid it...

2...e5

Already on move 2 we are in a rather rare position.

3.d4

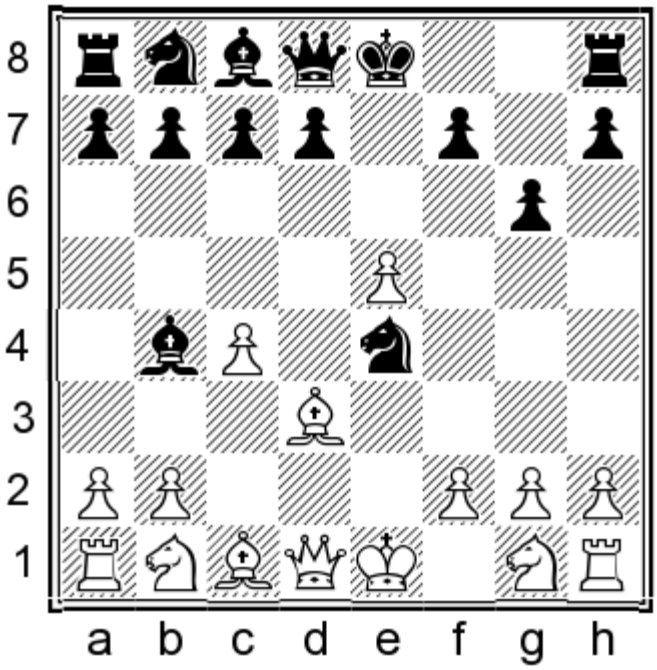
Clearly the most logical move! White is fighting for the center.

3...♘f6 4.dxe5

This is already a very rarely played continuation. In most of the top-level games White continued with 4.♘f3

4...♘xe4 5.♗d3 ♗b4+

A very logical reply, but maybe not the best.



I think Black could just continue with 5...♘c5 6.♘f3 d6 exchanging the e5 pawn. I think the position should be close to equal here.

6.♔f1!

A great move! Usually it is a bad idea not to castle, but right now White is gaining a few very important tempi to put Black under a lot of pressure.

6...♘c5

Again the simplest move, but I think it is only the second best. 6...d5!? could lead to a very crazy position where White has a lot of options, such as 7.f3 or 7.♕c2 or 7.♕e2.

7.♘f3

Simple and strong. White wants to continue with ♗g5.

7...♘e6

In case of 7...♘xd3 8.♕xd3 Black would try to develop the pieces normally with 8...♘c6 but White is clearly better after 9.♗g5 ♗e7 10.♗xe7 ♕xe7 11.♘c3 followed by ♘d5 with a big advantage.

8.a3

White prepares to play ♘c3.

8...♗e7

Another unclear decision. Maybe it was better for Black to play ...♗f8-♗g7 to at least cover the dark squares.

9.♘c3

The white knight is heading to d5, where it will stand perfectly.

9...d6

Of course the ...d6 move has to be played, but if we look at Black's first 9 moves, we can ask if everything went as expected... and it clearly did not.

10.exd6 ♗xd6 11.b4

White gains space on the queenside and prepares to play ♗b2.

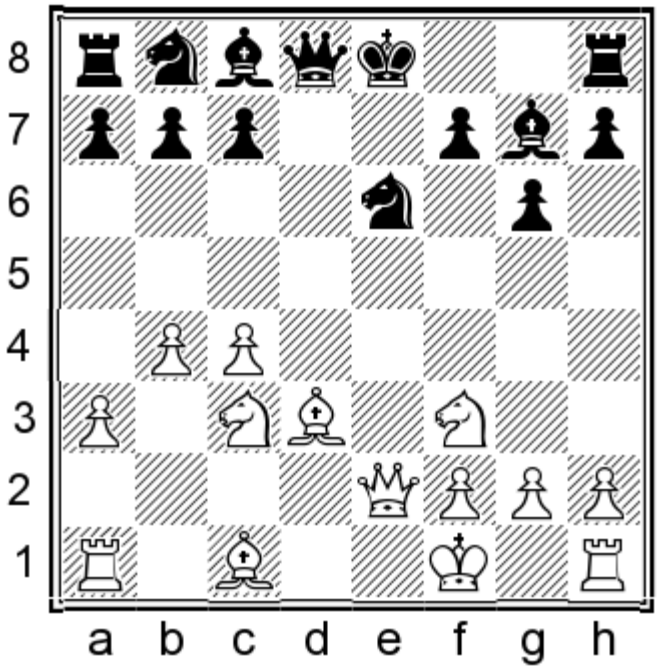
11...♗f8

Black would also be in a very dangerous position after 11...0-0 12.♗b2 ♘d7 13.h4! Now it is actually very useful for White that the rook is still on h1. 13...♘f6 14.h5 with a very dangerous attack.

12.♕e2

A creative move. An easier plan was 12.♗b2 ♗g7 13.♕c2 0-0 14.♖d1 and White's advantage is clear to see.

12...♗g7



13.♗g5!?

A very interesting approach, especially since Black has already made 5 moves with his bishop!

13...♗f6?!

and this clearly puts Black in a very difficult position. I think Giri should have continued with 13...f6 and, although it looks very ugly, it is still better than 13...♗f6?! 14.♗d2 0-0 15.h4 This might be what Black was afraid of, but actually he is not doing that badly here. 15...♘c6! with the idea of playing ...♘d4 or ...♘e5 next keeps Black alive. The position is better for White, but things are not so clear at all.

14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.♕d2

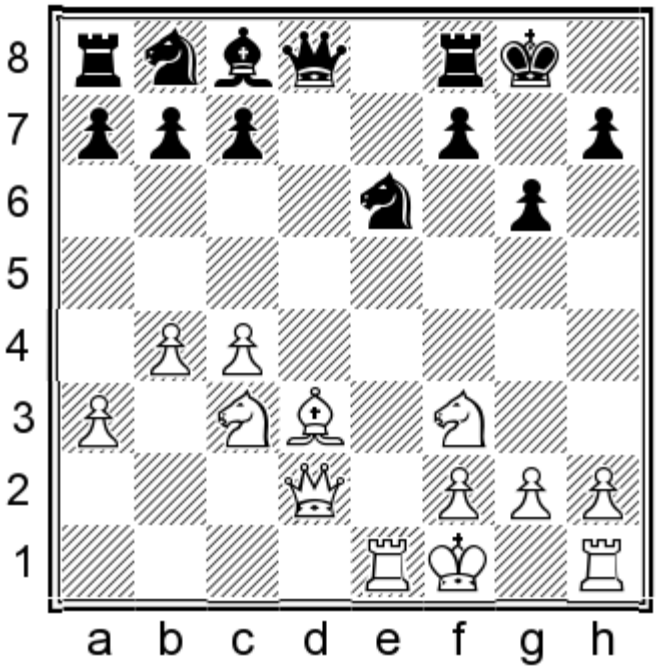
Now we can see that Black is very undeveloped, and also there are big problems arising on the dark squares.

15...0-0 16.♖e1

White prepares to play ♘e4 next, or perhaps h4.

16...♕d8

Black wants to play ...♘f4.



17.♖d1!?

Another very interesting move by White! 17.g3 followed by h4 or just ♔g2 with a clear advantage.

17...a5

Black searches for some counterplay.

18.h4!

Exactly the right choice! Black's play on the queenside is very slow, the direct attack on the black king looks really scary and we finally see the rook on h1 coming into action!

18...axb4 19.axb4 ♘d7

Black tries to bring some pieces over to the kingside.

20.h5 ♘f6 21.c5

White is playing for mate and doesn't care about winning some material. Another option was 21.♕c1 ♕d6 (*21...♕e7 22.♘d5! ♘xd5 23.cxd5 ♘g7 24.hxg6 fxg6 25.♖e1* and Black is just lost because of the open h-file.) 22.hxg6 fxg6 23.♗xg6 ♕f4 24.♗c2 with a clear pawn up in the endgame.

21...b6

Maybe Black should have taken a risk and played 21...♘xh5 Now White has a lot of choice. 22.♖xh5 (To a better but yet somewhat unclear position would lead *22.♕h6 ♖a1!* a strong move! *23.♖xa1 ♕xd3+ 24.♘e2 b6!* and of course White is clearly better, but Black is fighting.) 22...gxh5 23.♕h6 Now things are forced. 23...f5 24.♗xf5 ♕xd1+ 25.♘xd1 ♖xf5 26.♘e3 ♖a1+ 27.♘e1 and White is also much better here, but having 2 rooks gives Black clear chances in a practical fight.

22.hxg6 fxg6 23.♕e3

Now Black needs to be careful of a lot of different threats!

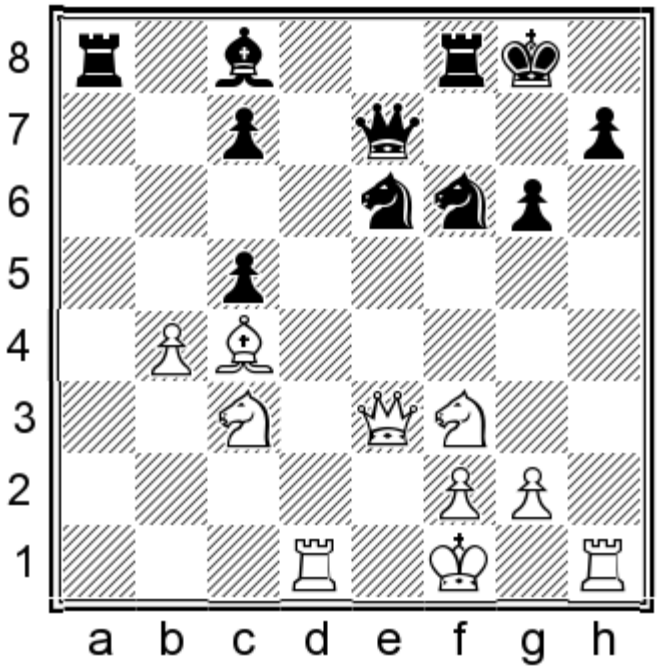
23...♕e7

The only move.

24.♗c4

A very logical move. The pin on the e-file is forever!

24...bxc5



25.b5!

A strong move! White is threatening to play ♖e1 and it is very unclear how to defend against it.

25...♖b8?

Under big pressure Giri makes a mistake. Black should have tried 25...c6!? and at least the fight is not over. 26.bxc6 ♗a6 getting rid of the nasty bishop on c4. 27.♕e2! but the white queen takes its place! 27...♗xc4 28.♕xc4 and of course White continues being much better, but Black could fight on with 28...♖ac8.

26.♖e1 ♖b6

and here comes the move that Giri probably blundered by missing:

27.♘a4!

The white knight gets to c5 with tempo!

27...♖d6 28.♘xc5

Now there is no way to hold the pressure on e6 any longer.

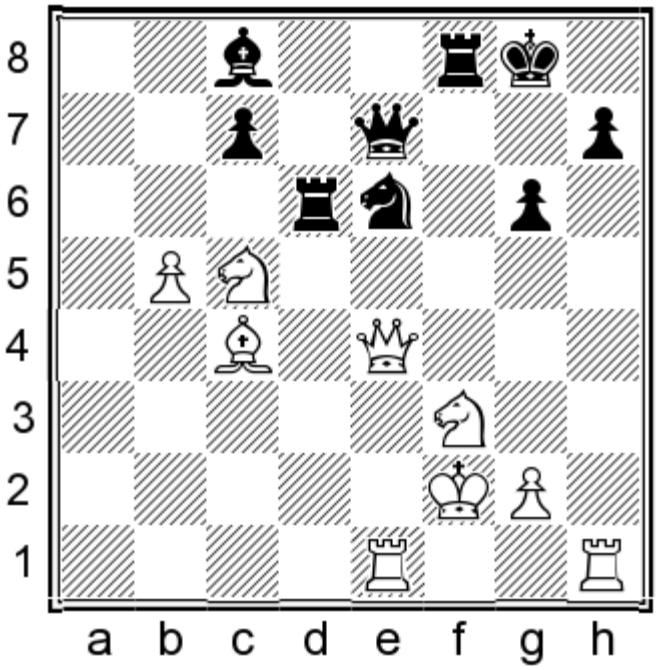
28...♘g4

Black launches a last-gasp attack as there are no chances to hold the piece on e6.

29.♕e4

A very safe and solid move.

29...♘xf2 30.♔xf2



30...♖d2+

One check is all that Black has.

31.♔g3 ♖xf3+

White is a rook up and the knight on e6 is still hanging! A very clean win by So, playing very creatively and not letting the black pieces enter the game.

32.gxf3 1–0

GAME 44
L. Dominguez Perez (2734)
D. Jakovenko (2738)
KM FIDE GP 2015
Khanty-Mansiysk RUS (2)
15.05.2015, [D43]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We are now going to see an extremely fighting and interesting game. Right from the beginning the position became sharp and it was hard to evaluate who was actually better. Just when it seemed as though Black was taking over, Jakovenko made a clear miscalculation and was mercilessly punished in the tactical battle.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3

This is one of the most popular positions in high-level chess at the moment and now Black has a lot of moves to choose from.

4...c6

Jakovenko chooses to go back to a Slav. He could also have played a Queen's Gambit after 4...♗e7, or a Ragozin after 4...♗b4.

5.g3

A very sharp line.

5...dxc4

The most critical move. Now the ideas are simple; Black tries to hold on to the extra pawn on c4 and White attempts to get good play in the center.

6.♗g2 ♘bd7

Black prepares to play ...b5.

7.a4

This is the usual way of avoiding ...b5.

7...♗b4

This move is played to avoid White's e4 push, because now Black will have ♗xc4 and ♘xe4.

8.0-0 0-0 9.♕c2

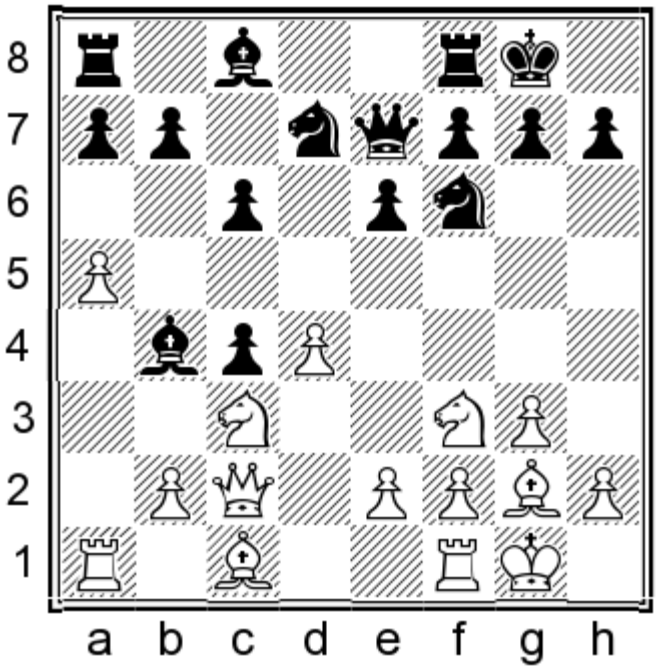
A very logical move, White prepares to play e4.

9...♕e7

and black is preparing to answer e4 with ...e5. Another idea could be to play ...c5 somewhere, but then the white bishop on g2 would become very strong.

10.a5

White is not only attempting to play a6 somewhere down the line to destroy Black's pawn structure, but ♖a4 could also be good at some point in the future.



10...e5

10...a6 was also possible and now White would have to choose between ♖a4 and maybe ♖d1 e5, and we would be back to the position in the game.

11.♖d1

A good move! White keeps the pressure in the center. Another interesting try for White could have been 11.a6!? bxa6 Of course Black has other options, but to leave the a6-pawn alive is a dangerous choice. 12.dxe5 ♘xe5 13.♘xe5 ♕xe5 14.♗xc6 but maybe Black is just fine after 14...♗f5! and the position is probably close to equal.

11...a6

A solid move, but perhaps Black could have played a bit more directly. 11...exd4 doesn't look too bad. 12.♘xd4 ♘e5 13.a6 ♖d8 and Black's position is probably a bit worse, but nothing too dramatic.

12.d5

Let the action begin!

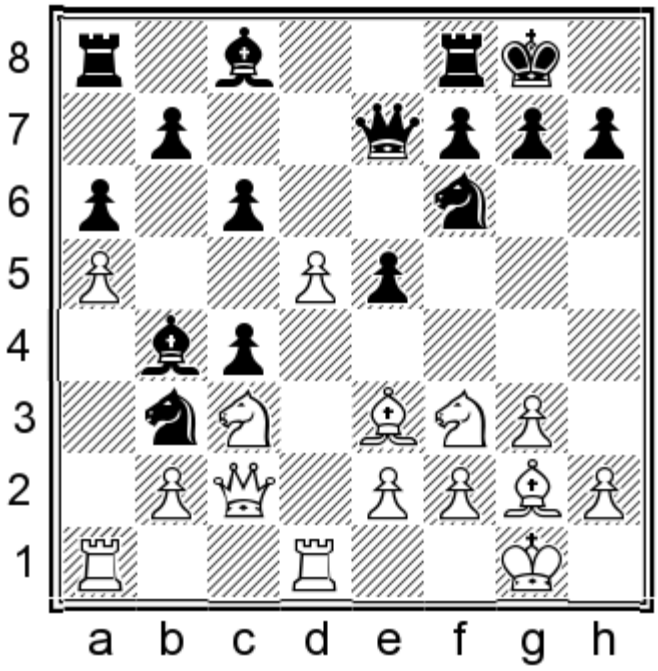
12...♘c5

A very logical move — the black knight is heading to b3. Of course White would be much better after 12...♗xc3? 13.d6! ♕e8 14.bxc3 and the d6 pawn is a beast! It also didn't make much sense for Black to continue with 12...cxd5 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♖xd5 and White is simply better because the c4-pawn is going to fall very soon.

13.♗e3

A solid move, but maybe White had a better choice. Dominguez could have tried to first play d6 in order to avoid ...♕e8. 13.d6 ♕e6 (*13...♕e8 14.♘a4* and White's advantage seems to be clear.) 14.♗e3 and White's position is very active.

13...♘b3



14.♖a4

Now we can see how useful the a5 move was.

14...c5

Probably the best move to get an open game! Of course it looks dangerous to have the ♗b4 totally out of the game, but the rook on a4 is now passive too.

15.d6

The d-pawn rolls.

15...♕e8

All Black needs is one move to play ...♘d4 next.

16.♖xb4!

An excellent move! The d6-pawn will compensate the loss of the exchange.

16...cxb4 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.♖xd5

What a complicated position. White is a full exchange and a pawn down, but the d6-pawn is extremely strong and White also has the threat of just taking the e5 or c4-pawn, as well as to play ♘g5 with some attack on the king.

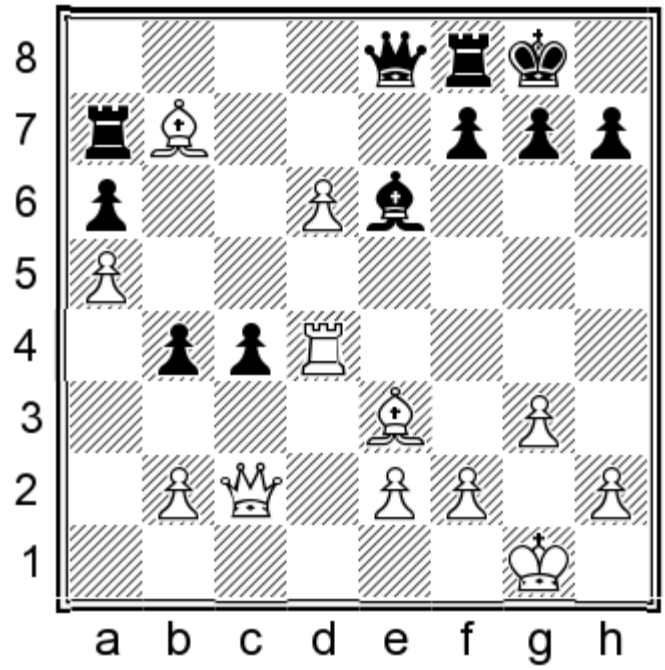
18...♘d4?!

A logical move, but probably not the best. 18...♕a4 19.♘g5 (*19.♘xe5 ♗e6* and of course the position remains very unclear, but Black's chances don't seem to be worse.) 19...g6 20.♗e4 and it is really hard to tell who is in charge here,

as it is a material advantage against White's domination!

19.♗xd4

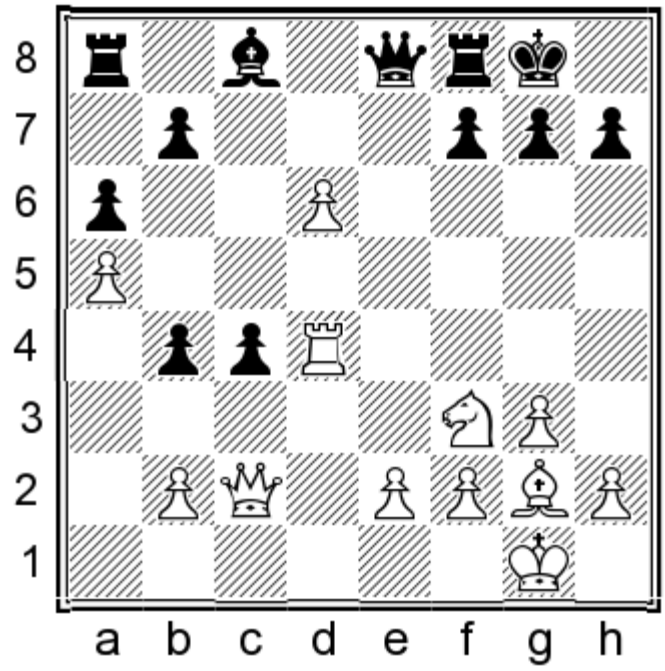
Yet again I'm not sure this was the best move. 19.♘xd4 looks very logical. 19...exd4 20.♖xd4 Now the c4-pawn is hanging and if White can take it, it is clear that he will have more than just compensation. 20...♗e6 21.♗xb7 ♕b5 (Black can't save the exchange with *21...♖a7*



22.♖h4! with a double attack on a7 and h7.) 22.♗xa8 ♖xa8 and in my opinion White's position is clearly better, although of course Black keeps drawing chances.

19...exd4 20.♖xd4

Another strange move in my opinion.



Why not take the pawn with the knight and open up the g2-bishop?! 20.♘xd4

20...b3!

A good choice. Black is willing to give away both pawns, c4 and b4.

21.♕xc4 ♗e6

Now the b3-pawn could become very dangerous in the future.

22.♕d3 ♕c6

The position remains very complex, but now Black already has the simpler plan of playing ...♕c2 at some point.

23.♕d2

White continues playing very solid chess.

23...♖ac8?!

Better was 23...♕c2 24.♘g5 ♕b1+ 25.♗f1 ♗d7 with very unclear play.

24.♘e1?!

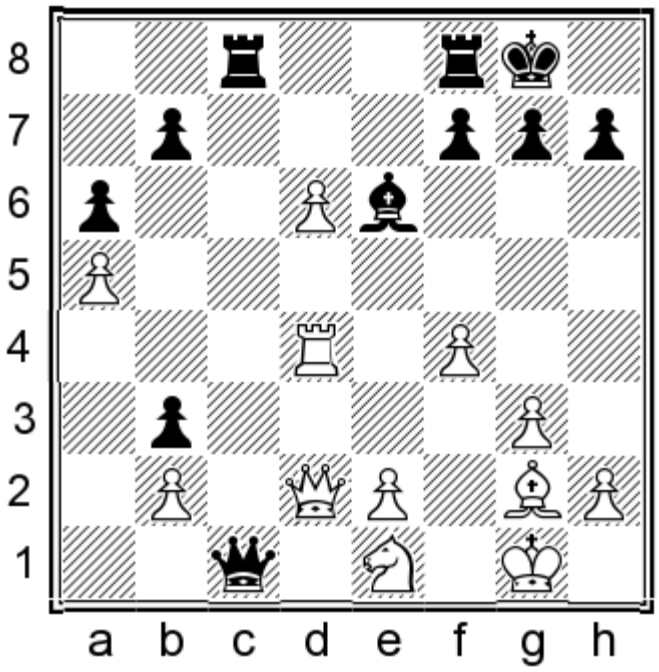
Both players seem to have missed the d7 move... 24.d7! was the right move. 24...♖cd8 (I guess both players missed the following line: *24...♕c1+ 25.♗f1 ♕xd2* and now White wins with the amazing *26.dxc8=♕!*) 25.♘g5 and it is already White who is pushing for a win.

24...♕c1

Of course! Entering an endgame is a good idea for Black.

25.f4

White’s best chance.



25...♕b1?!

This move is hard to understand... After the simple 25...♕xd2 26.♖xd2 ♖c5 Black is better.

26.♔f2

The white pieces are very safely placed.

26...♖c2?

This is already a blunder. 26...♖fd8 leads to a worse, but playable, position.

27.♕b4!

A strong move! White wants to play d7 and at the same time ♗e4.

27...♖e8

27...♕xb2 28.♘xc2 ♕xc2 29.d7 and White is easily winning.

28.♗e4

Black is lost!

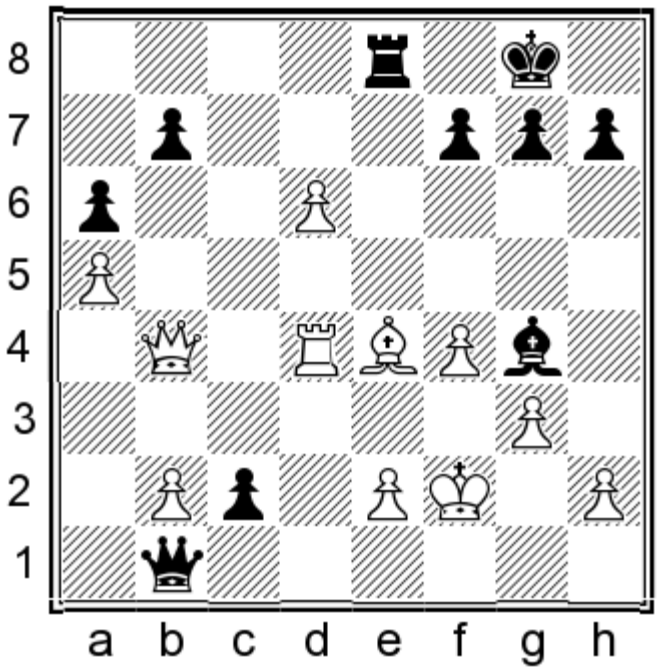
28...♗g4

Jakovenko tries his last chance and creates some complications.

29.♘xc2

Perfect play by White.

29...bxc2



30.♕a4!

and this move wins the game. The rook on e8 and the pawn on c2 are hanging. The game is over.

30...♔f8 31.d7 ♗xd7

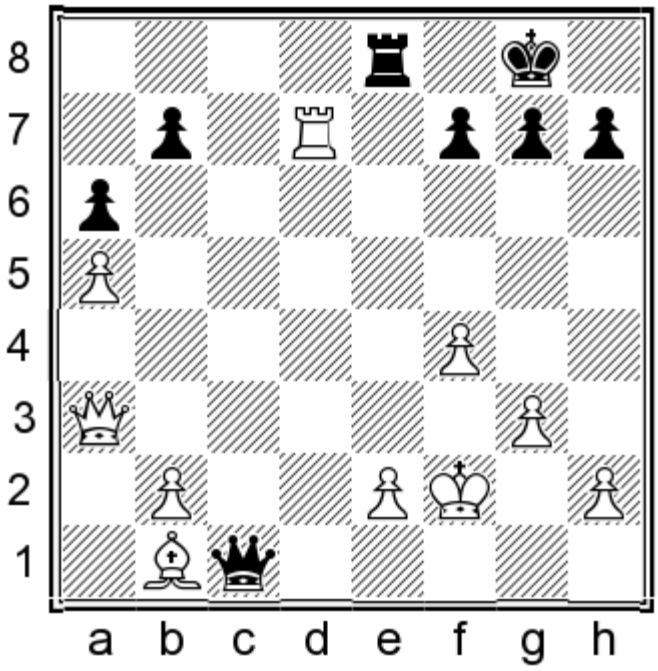
31...♖d8 32.♕b4+ ♔g8 33.♕e7+–

32.♖xd7 c1=♕

All the other moves were losing anyway...

33.♕a3+ ♔g8 34.♗xb1

White is more than just a pawn up, since the bishop on b1 is untouchable.



34...g6

34...♕xb1 35.♕e7 and the game is over.

35.♕b3 ♕c5+ 36.e3

From being an exchange and a pawn down, White finds himself a full piece and a pawn up! All-in-all a very interesting game with some mistakes, but Jakovenko's 25...♕b1 is really hard to understand...

1–0

GAME 45
M. Carlsen (2853)
V. Topalov (2816)
3rd Sinquefield Cup 2015
Saint Louis USA (1.1)
23.08.2015, [B51]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

And history repeats itself. In Stavanger we also saw the pairing Carlsen-Topalov in the first round — where Carlsen lost on time(!) in a winning position. In the current game, things developed very differently. Topalov managed to surprise Carlsen very early on with the aggressive 7...g5. Carlsen, after thinking for a long time, went for an aggressive line. He sacrificed a piece for the attack, which led nowhere after great defensive play by Topalov. From move 30 the players were in quite serious time-trouble and when it was over, Carlsen had nothing else left than to resign.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+

Carlsen likes this move a lot. He has had great results in this line, beating a lot of top players, such as Anand for example.

3...♘d7

This is probably the most aggressive reply, although the most played move is 3...♗d7.

4.0-0

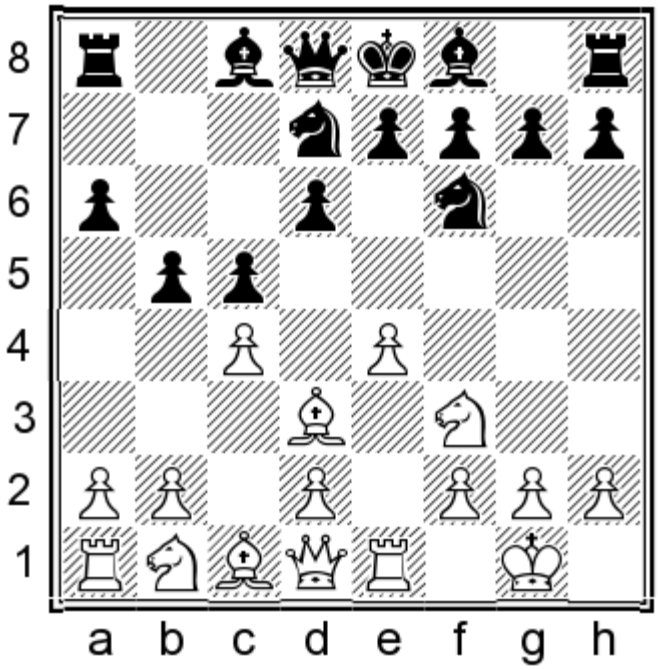
4.d4 is more often seen here.

4...♘gf6 5.♖e1 a6 6.♗d3

A strange-looking move, but nothing new. White plans to play c3-♗c2 and d4. The other possible line is 6.♗f1 b6 7.d4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♗b7 9.f3 and White tries to reach a hedgehog system with a tempo less, which doesn't matter much.

6...b5 7.c4

We are in a position with almost no games played in it, but... there is one game: Carlsen-Nakamura from the 2014 Zurich Rapid.



7...g5!

I think this is a great reply and it is clear that this move was nothing new to Topalov. 7...♘e5 8.♗f1 ♘xc4 9.a4 ♗d7 10.d4 cxd4 11.♘xd4 followed in the game Carlsen-Nakamura, with a slightly better position for White.

8.♘xg5

Clearly one of the most critical moves in the position. Another one is 8.cxb5 g4 9.♘h4 (*9.e5 dxe5 10.♘g5 ♗g7* with a very unbalanced game.) 9...♘e5 (*9...e6 10.♘c3 ♗h6 11.♗e2 ♗g5* and now White has the great *12.d4 ♗xh4 13.g3* winning back the piece and clearly keeping some advantage.) 10.♗e2 e6 11.♘c3 followed by d4 and maybe White can hope for some advantage.

8...♘e5

Black heads for the c4-pawn.

9.♗e2 bxc4

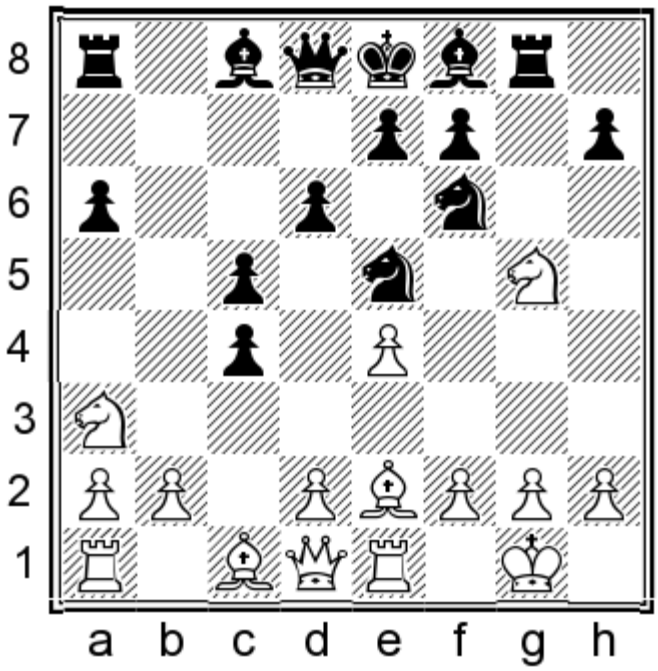
We are faced with a very complex position. The black king will most probably remain in the center, but for that Black has a great knight on e5 and will clearly develop some play on the kingside. The white bishop on c1 is also very passive for now. White should try to play actively and open the position -as much as possible and as soon as possible.

10.♘a3

Carlsen goes for the c4-pawn as well, but it looks a bit too slow. Probably it is too early for 10.f4 ♘d3 and the white king is even more vulnerable than before. But very interesting is 10.d4!? cxd3 11.♗xd3 with the easy plan of playing ♘c3 and starting some play in the center. The position is very complex.

10...♖g8

Simple and strong. White needs to decide what to do with the knight on g5.



11.♘xc4?!

I think that this piece sacrifice is a mistake. The best move was probably 11.d4 cxd3 12.♗xd3 but of course the white knight is already not as nicely placed on a3 as he would have been on c3. 12...h6 13.♘f3 ♘xd3 14.♕xd3 d5 and I think only Black can be playing for an advantage here.

11...♘xc4

The piece has to be taken.

12.d4

This was White’s plan.

12...♘b6

A very solid move. A serious mistake would be to play 12...h6? 13.♘xf7! ♔xf7 14.♗xc4+ and White's attack is very dangerous.

13.♗h5

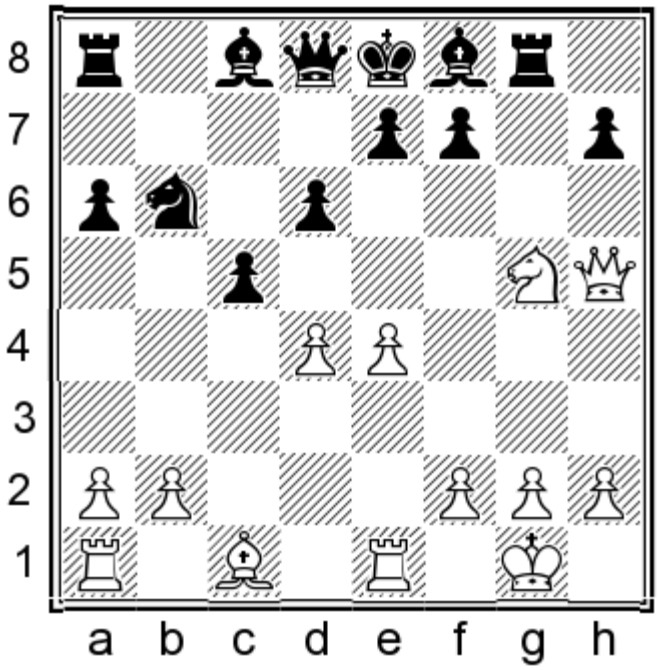
Carlsen was clearly aiming for this move before playing 11.♘xc4?! The endgame after 13.dxc5 dxc5 14.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 15.♘xf7+ ♔e8 is clearly better for Black. Two pawns are not enough for a full piece.

13...♘xh5

The most principled and again Topalov's calculation does not let him down.

14.♕xh5

Now Black has several options.



14...♖g7

Probably not the most accurate move. 14...♖g6 leads to a clearly better position for Black, e.g. 15.♕xh7 (*15.dxc5 dxc5 16.♕xh7 ♖g7 17.♕h8 ♕d4* and Black is much better.) 15...♖g7 16.♕h8 cxd4 17.♘h7 ♖xh7 18.♕xh7 e5 and Black has a clear advantage. Playing the simple 14...♖xg5 15.♗xg5 cxd4 should also give Black some edge.

15.♘xh7

Carlsen is trying his chances.

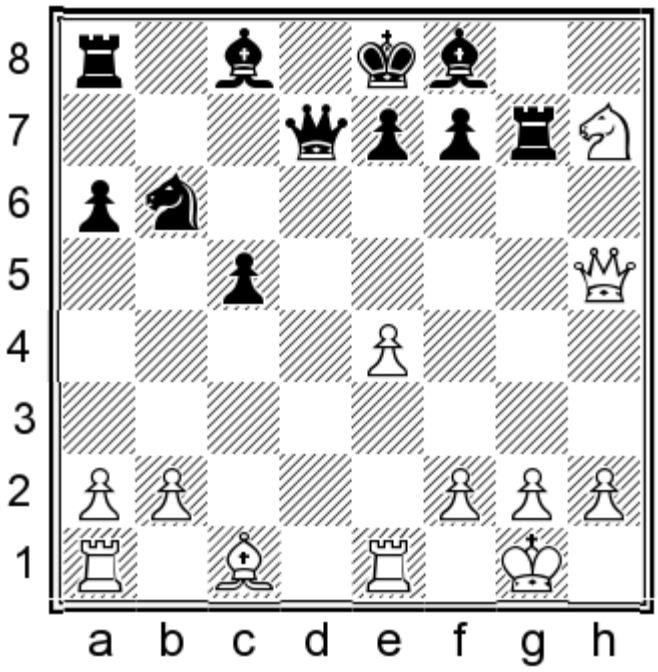
15...♕d7?!

Another unlucky move by Topalov, giving White serious chances to make things very unclear. I think the position after 15...♗g4 16.♕h6 ♖xh7 17.♕xh7 cxd4 should be better for Black.

16.dxc5

White opens the position even more.

16...dxc5



17.e5?

What a present from Carlsen... Clearly both players misevaluated the position after 17.♘xf8 ♕h3 18.♕xh3 ♗xh3 19.g3 At first sight it seems like Black is going to win the knight on f8 somehow, but in fact it is really hard to do. White is two pawns up and wants to play ♗h6 next. 19...♖g8 20.♘h7 f6 trying to isolate the knight and threatening to play ...♖h8 next. 21.e5 ♖h8 22.♘xf6+ exf6 23.exf6+ ♔f7 24.♗g5 with a very complex position.

17...♕c6!

The right choice! The g2-pawn is hanging and at the same time Black wants to play ...♕g6 next. This move probably came as a surprise for Carlsen.

18.f3

No better is 18.♘f6+ ♔d8 19.♘e4 ♗e6 and all the black pieces are in the game, so Black should be close to winning.

18...♕g6

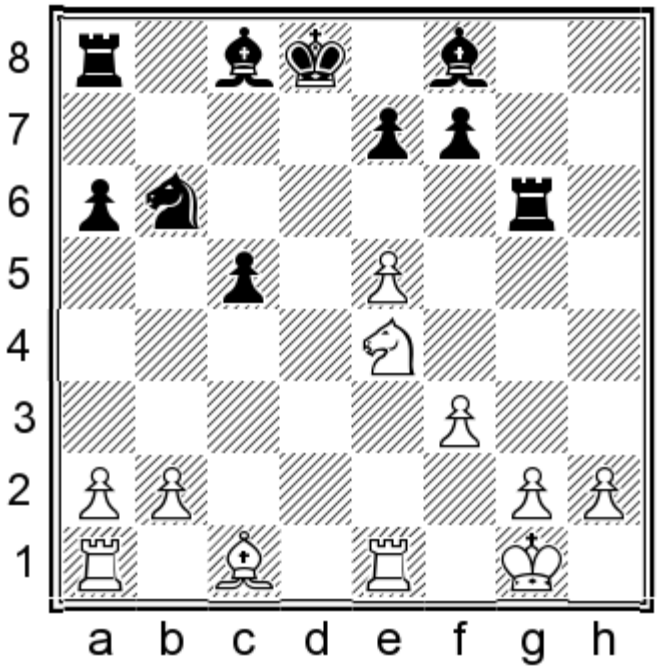
Of course you don’t need to think long before going for the exchange of queens.

19.♘f6+ ♔d8

There are no more checks left and that means White has no choice but to enter a lost endgame.

20.♕xg6 ♖xg6 21.♘e4

White still has some hopes as long as the black king is on d8 and maybe there is a chance to grab the c5 pawn.



21...♗b7

A very solid move, developing a piece and at the same time protecting the c5-pawn because of ♗xf3.

22.h4

Carlsens starts looking for chances on the kingside.

22...♖c8

Another very accurate move. Black is slowly bringing his pieces into the game.

23.h5 ♖g8 24.♗d2

♗a5 is a threat now.

24...♘c4

Black wants to exchange some pieces.

25.♗c3 ♗h6

Black's pieces are now all in play.

26.♖ad1+ ♔e8

The black king feels very safe on e8.

27.♖d3 ♗f4!

A strong move! White has big trouble defending the e5-pawn.

28.♘f2 ♗c6

Black is preparing to play ...♗b5 somewhere.

29.♘h3

This is clearly not the best, but it is hard to give White any advice. Maybe a bigger fight could have been started with 29.g4 with the idea of playing ♔g2 next and dreaming of playing ♘h3, but of course all that would not change much, since Black would remain a piece up and with a clearly winning position in the long run.

29...♗g3 30.♖e2 ♗b5

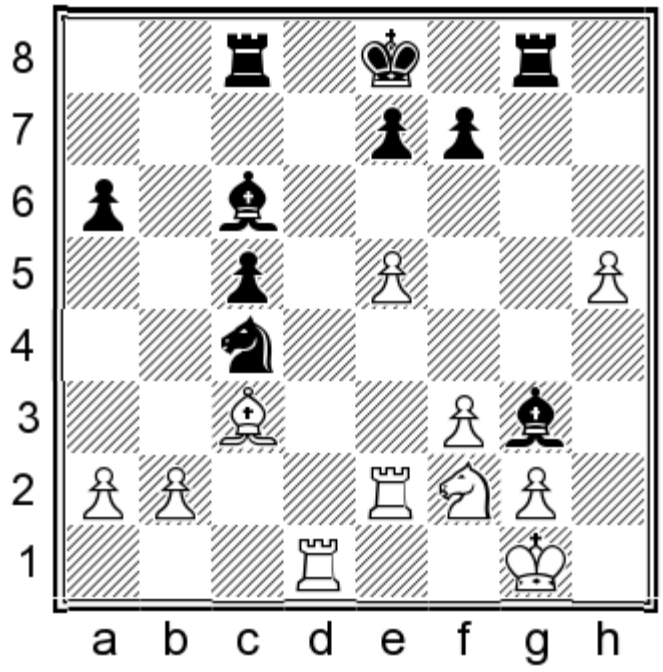
White's pieces are completely hopeless.

31.♖d1 ♗c6

Being short on time, Topalov decided to repeat the moves once. 31...♘b6 32.♖c2 ♖h8 and there is no way to defend against ♖xh5.

32.♘f2

Carlsen doesn't repeat the moves, which is not because White is playing for a win, but he is looking for chances before move 40, where both players will get an extra hour.



32...♗xe5!

The decisive blow! Even when he doesn't have much time, Topalov doesn't miss such tactics.

33.♘g4

After 33.♖xe5 ♘xe5 34.♗xe5 ♗xf3 White can basically resign because ♖xg2 is coming next. 33.♗xe5 ♗xf3 is over as well.

33...♗xc3 34.bxc3 ♔f8

Now White only has a pawn for a piece. The end of the game is near.

35.♔f2 ♖h8

Topalov continues playing very solidly.

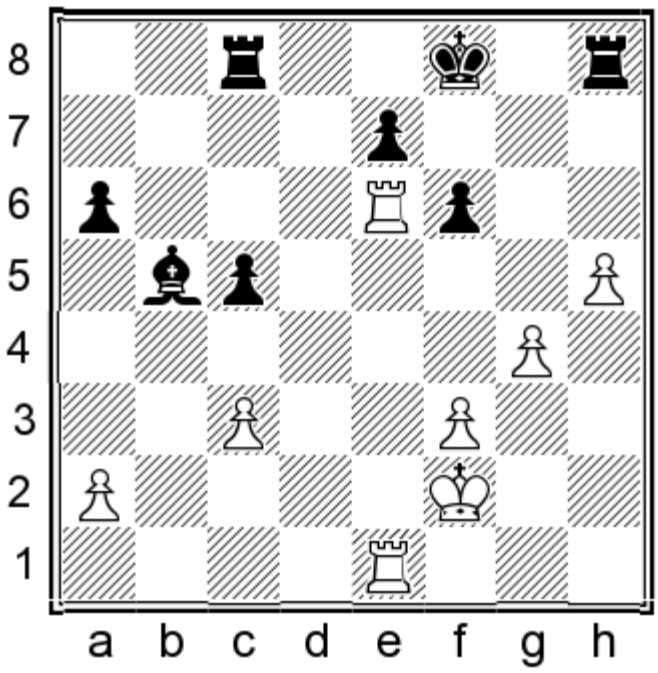
36.♘e5 ♘xe5 37.♖xe5 ♗e8

Everything is protected.

38.g4 f6 39.♖e6 ♗b5

There is only one more move to make to reach time control.

40.♖de1



40...♖c7

White can't even attack anything and the time-trouble phase is over. Black's position is totally winning so Carlsen takes the only right decision and this is to resign this very unpleasant game for him. Another great victory by Topalov over Carlsen, who clearly was very emotional during the current game and didn't play at his usual level.

0–1

GAME 46
S. Mamedyarov (2736)
P. Idani (2569)
FIDE World Cup 2015
Baku AZE (1.19)
13.09.2015, [D05]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We are in the first knock-out match of the World Cup 2015 in Baku. Everyone has the same goal, to get into the Final, which would guarantee participation in the Candidates Tournament. In the first round a lot of matches have a clear favorite, but in a 2-game match anything can happen, which is why it is extremely important to start well and Mamedyarov does it the right way. We are going to see a clear domination in understanding, and precise finishing by the Azeri Super GM. A very nice game to take notes from.

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e3

Hard to call this move “preparation” but on the other hand it is quite common for a strong player to try and avoid the preparation of the “weaker” one, in order not to run into some deep analyses where the strength of play would not matter so much.

3...e6

Black could have continued with 3...♗f5 or just 3...c6 but Idani was probably not ready to play the Slav Defense which would appear after 4.c4.

4.♗d3 ♗e7

A slightly strange move-order. Usually Black chooses to play 4...c5 and then decides where to put the bishop, on e7 or d6. Usually it is a better idea to keep the bishop on d6 in connection with ...♘bd7 and on e7 in connection with ...c5-♘c6.

5.b3 b6

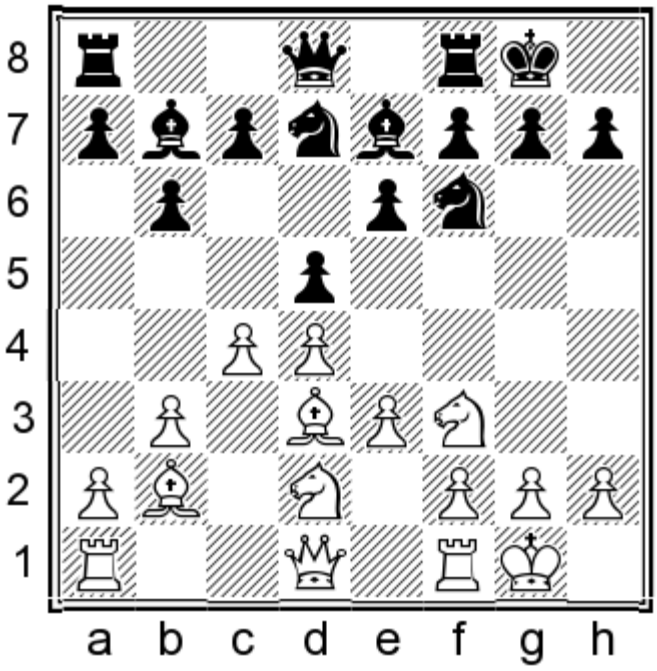
Black keeps on copying White’s moves, which will give White a small opening plus- something that should not normally happen after a move like 3.e3.

6.♗b2 ♗b7 7.♘bd2 ♘bd7

In my opinion Black should have tried the ...c5 move and then ...♘c6, which is a better setup.

8.0-0 0-0 9.c4

Now White has some opening advantage.



9...♘e4

and this is another very risky move for Black. In the future, Idani's idea is clearly to play ...f5, but it will weaken a lot of squares and give White some tactical motifs.

10.♖c1

The rook clearly belongs on the c-file.

10...♗d6

Why play ...♗e7 if you want to play ...♗d6 later?! This is not a good idea.

11.♕c2

White wants to provoke Black into playing ...f5 and then put some more pressure on the c-file.

11...f5

The provocation has worked.

12.♖fd1

A very solid move, but maybe not the best. 12.cxd5! looks very logical. 12...exd5 13.♘e5 putting Black under a lot of pressure. 13...♕e7 14.♘df3 Black can never take on e5 because of the weak c7-pawn and White is just planning to play ♘c6 or ♗b5 next. It is clear that White should be clearly better here.

12...♕e7

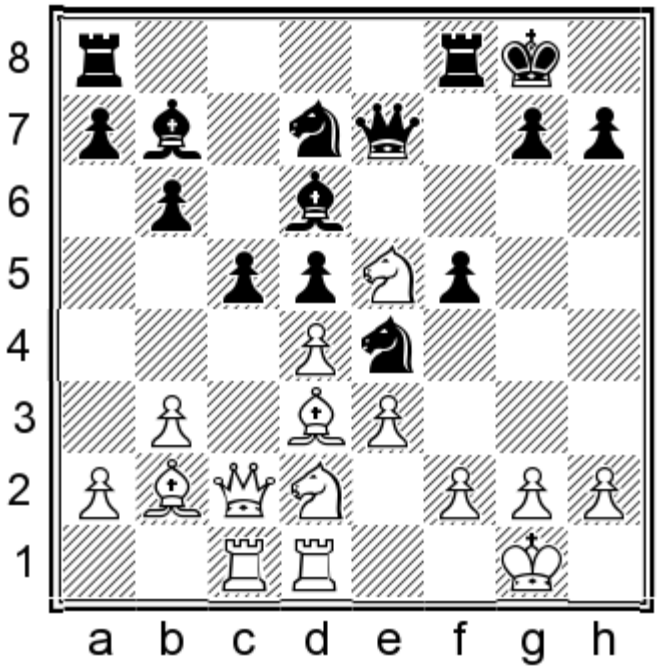
The queen is well placed on e7.

13.cxd5 exd5 14.♘e5

This is clearly White’s main idea, but now we can see that a move like ♖fd1 is not really useful- for now at least.

14...c5?

This is already a blunder.



Black should have tried to just be solid with 14...♖ac8 15.♘df3 (Of course White can’t play *15.♘c6?* since after *15...♗xh2+!* it is already him who is losing. *16.♔xh2 ♕h4+ 17.♔g1 ♕xf2+*) 15...c5 with a better position for White, but the fight has just begun.

15.♘xe4!!

Mamedyarov doesn’t miss his chance to almost finish the game.

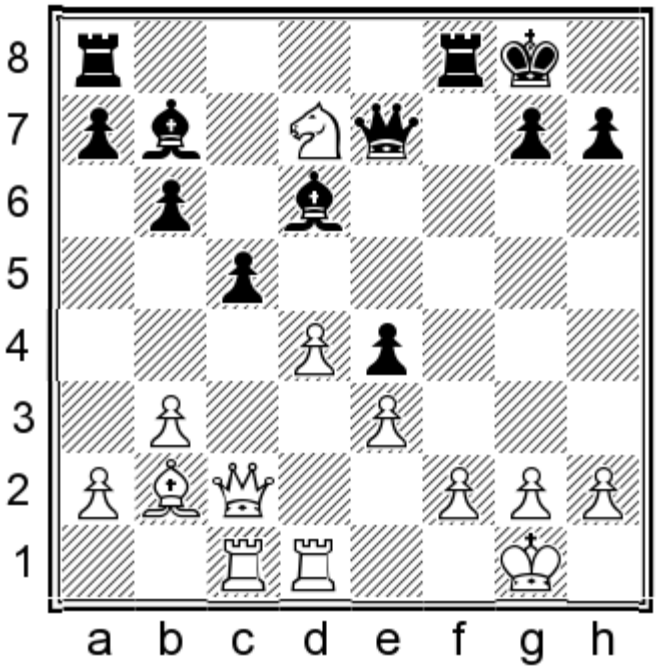
15...fxe4 16.♗xe4!

This was White’s idea. Now we can see how useful the rook on d1 is.

16...dxe4

Black has no choice.

17.♘xd7



17...♕xd7?

After this move Black's hopes are all gone. The only move was 17...♖f5 but after 18.dxc5 bxc5 19.♕c4+ ♔h8 and the exchange sacrifice 20.♖xd6 ♕xd6 21.♘xc5 Black is also in deep trouble. White has 2 pawns for the exchange and the bishop on b2 is a beast. Black still has some chances to fight, but White is clearly better.

18.dxc5 ♗xh2+

No better is 18...bxc5 19.♗e5 and Black can't defend the d6-bishop in a sensible way. 19...♖f6 20.♗xf6 gxf6 21.♕xc5 ♖d8 22.♕xa7 White has 3 pawns for the rook vs 2 black bishops, which gives White a totally winning position.

19.♔xh2 ♕c7+ 20.♔g1 ♖ac8

Black is hoping to escape into an opposite-colored bishop endgame, but it is only possible in theory.

21.♕c4+ ♖f7 22.cxb6

Very simple and strong.

22...♕xb6

In case of 22...♕xc4 23.♖xc4 ♖xc4 24.bxc4 axb6 25.♖d8+ ♖f8 26.♖d6 White would collect the b6-pawn and just be 2 pawns up in a winning endgame.

23.♕a4

With the idea of playing ♗d4 at some point to win the a7-pawn.

23...♖cf8

Attacking the f2 pawn.

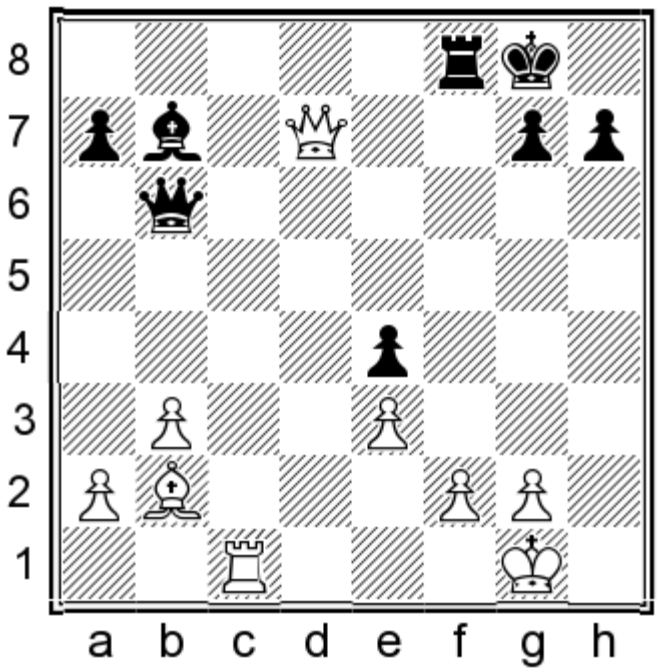
24.♖d7

Exchanging one pair of rooks.

24...♖xd7

24...♖xf2 25.♖xg7+ ♔h8 26.♖xb7+ and the game is over.

25.♕xd7



25...♖f7

One of Black’s main problems still remains- the very bad bishop on b7 against the great white bishop on b2.

26.♕e8+ ♖f8 27.♕a4

Now of course White is already threatening to play ♗d4 and win the a7 pawn.

27...a6 28.♕c4+ ♖f7

In case of 28...♔h8 White would win with 29.♕c7! attacking the g7-pawn.

29.♖d1

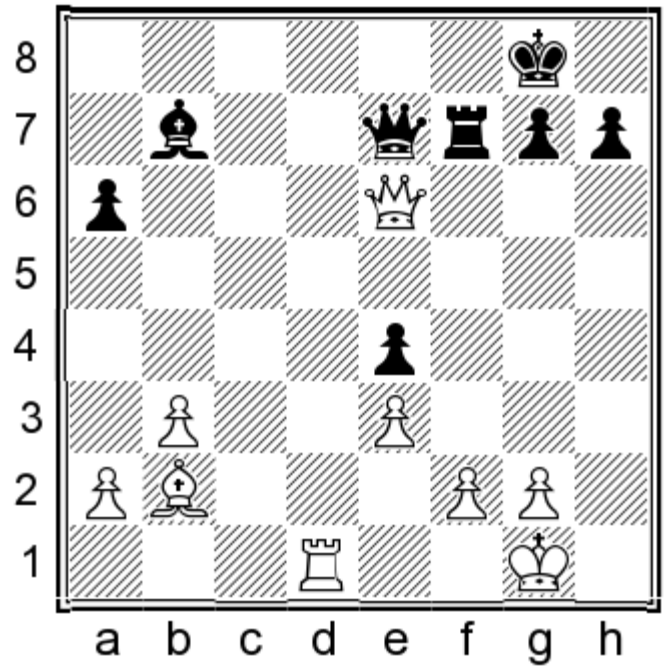
The c8-square is protected by the bishop on b7, so White aims at the d8 one.

29...♕c7 30.♕e6

Of course not exchanging the queens.

30...♕e7

and in a bad position Idani blunders again.



30...h6 31.♖d6 would keep the game alive for a couple of more moves, but the result would probably be the same.

31.♗a3!

It is all over. Of course Black can't play 31...♕xe6 because of 32.♖d8 ♖f8 and 33.♖xf8 mate. A great start for Mamedyarov in the World Cup in his home country Azerbaijan.

1–0

GAME 47
A. Grischuk (2774)
B. Adhiban (2674)
World Rapid 2015
Berlin GER (1.2)
10.10.2015, [A45]
Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Grischuk is clearly one of the best players in the world, and especially so in rapid and blitz, which he proved once again by winning the blitz event. In the rapid things didn't go too well for him, although he showed some great and exciting chess. In the current game, things get very interesting right from the start. White later on sacrificed a piece for the attack and managed to mate the black king in beautiful style. A great game to just enjoy the beauty of chess!

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗f4

Lately we have seen a few games by Grischuk playing this slightly strange opening, but he is showing great results with it, beating Anand in it in classical chess not that long ago for example.

2...c5

Adhiban goes for one of the most forcing lines possible, but of course Black also has calm moves like 2...g6 or 2...d5.

3.e3 ♕b6

This is Black’s idea, to directly disturb White’s development by attacking the b2-pawn.

4.♘c3

We are still following theory. White gives up the b2 pawn.

4...♕xb2 5.♘ge2

An interesting move. 5.♘b5 ♘d5 is the main line.

5...♕b6

After taking the b2-pawn, the black queen is going back to hide on d8. Maybe Black had another interesting choice: 5...d6!? with a very complicated position.

6.♖b1 ♕d8 7.dxc5

The material is equal and White has much better development, but on the other hand White’s pawn structure is really bad, so he will need to act dynamically.

7...g6 8.g3

To put the bishop on g2 is nice of course, as the b7-pawn will always be under attack.

8...♘a6 9.♕d4

The c5-pawn needs to be protected.

9...♗g7 10.♗g2

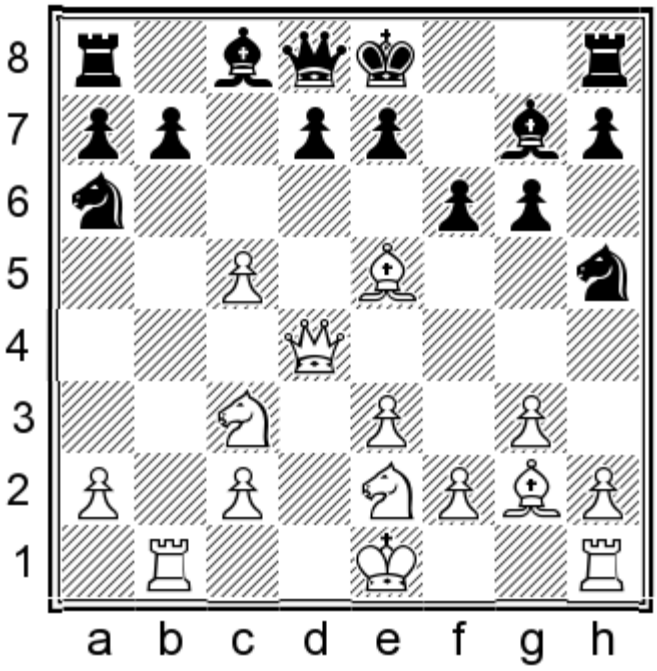
Grischuk goes for the piece sacrifice!

10...♘h5

This is Black’s best choice. If he did not try to fight, White’s position would be clearly better.

11.♗e5 f6

The bishop has no moves, but it doesn’t matter!



12.♗f4

Strong play!

12...e5 13.♕c4 exf4 14.exf4

Grischuk is aiming for a big fight. 14.♗xb7! seems to have been stronger. 14...♗xb7 15.♖xb7 ♘c7 16.g4 trapping the knight on h5.

14...♗f8!

Adhiban is also playing a good game. Black can't castle, so something needs to be done. By playing ...♗f8 Black not only attacks the c5-pawn, but also brings the bishop to e7 if needed.

15.0-0 ♘xc5

A normal move for rapid chess, but it was better to take the c5-pawn with the bishop. 15...♖b8 16.♘d4 ♗xc5 when Black's position is still very dangerous, but it seems like White doesn't have anything immediate.

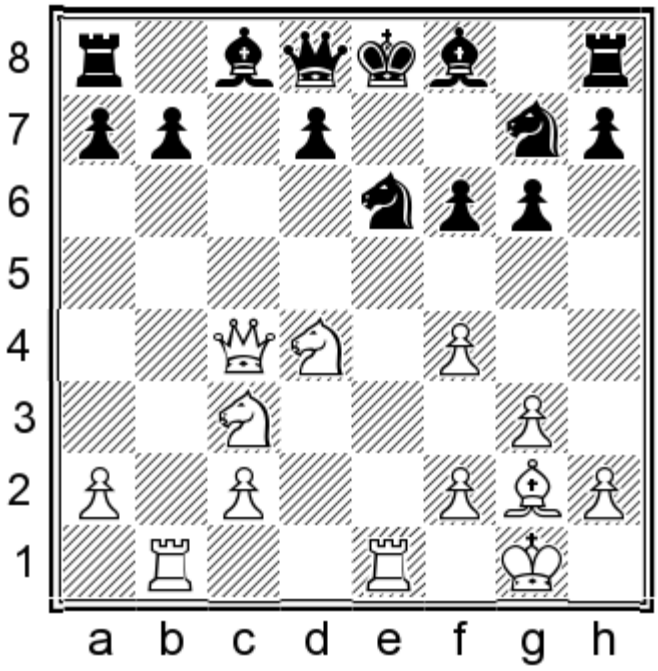
16.♘d4

White only has a pawn for the piece, but because of his excellent development and the great position of his pieces Black is in trouble!

16...♘g7

The second knight joins the defense.

17.♖fe1+ ♘ce6



18.♘d5

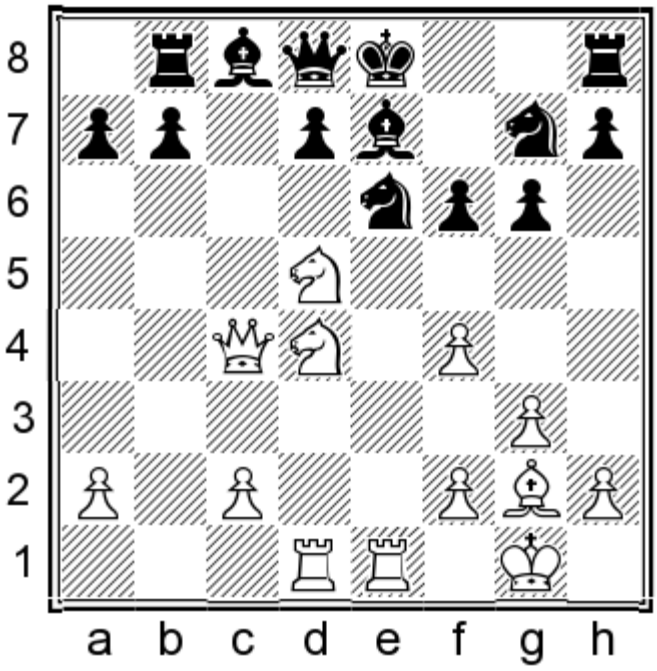
All the white pieces are in the attack, but Grischuk once again doesn't take on b7, which would have been the strongest move. The simple 18.♗xb7 ♗xb7 19.♘xe6 ♘xe6 20.♖xb7 ♗e7 21.♘d5 would have faced Black with huge problems and it seems like the idea of playing ♖xe6 is hard to defend against.

18...♖b8 19.♖bd1

The last piece joins the attack.

19...♗e7

This is a mistake, as now White has a direct blow!



A crazy move like 19...♔f7! would keep the game alive. It is hard to see how White can win something directly and a piece up is a piece up...

20.♘xe6!

The beginning of a small, but nice combination.

20...♘xe6 21.♖xe6 dxe6 22.♘c7+ ♔f7 23.♖xd8 ♖xd8

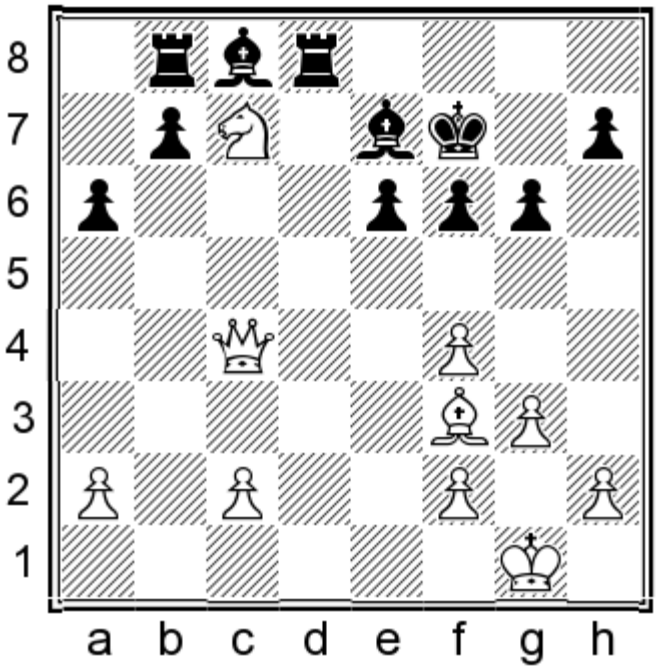
The material is now more-or-less balanced, but Black still has problems with the king.

24.♗f3

Defending against ...♖d1 check and threatening to play f5, but now Black is in time to defend from this threat. White could have tried 24.f5 ♖d1+ 25.♗f1 gxf5 26.♕e2 and ♕h5 check is very unpleasant.

24...a6

Black doesn’t feel the danger.



24...f5 would have been the right choice to defend, and the position is very unclear.

25.f5!

White starts his crush!

25...b5 26.♕b3 ♖b6

This move just loses on the spot. 26...gxf5 would lead to a bad, but still fighting position. 27.♗h5+ ♔g7 28.♘xe6+ ♗xe6 29.♕xe6 ♗f8 and of course White's chances to win the game are good, but things are far from over, especially in rapid chess.

27.♕e3!

A great move. The white queen is being transfered from b3 to h6!

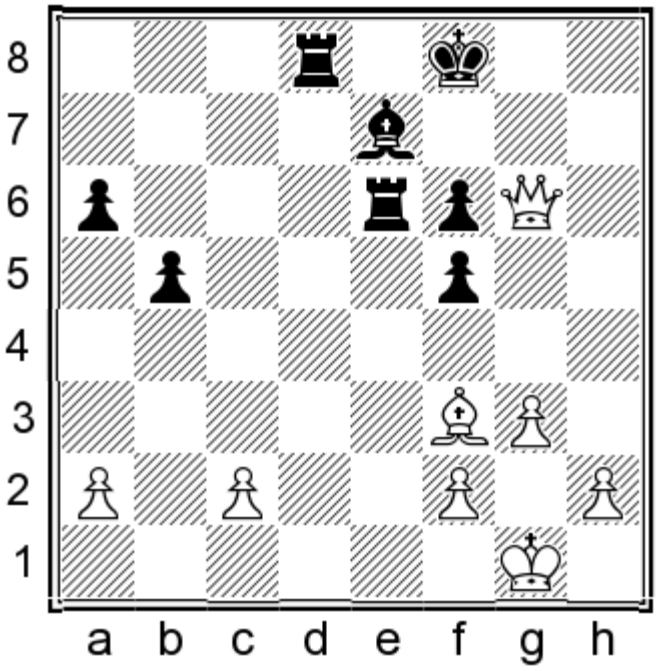
27...♖bd6 28.♕h6

and the game is over. Black cannot defend against ♕xh7.

28...exf5 29.♕xh7+ ♔f8 30.♕xg6

All the pawns are falling and ♗h5 is a deadly threat.

30...♗e6 31.♘xe6+ ♖xe6



32.♗h5

There is no way to defend aganist ♕f7 mate! A nice game by Grischuk, showing great feeling for the position and the active pieces!

1–0

GAME 48
W. So (2760)
Ding Liren (2782)
8th Grand Slam Masters
Bilbao ESP (1.1)
26.10.2015, [E98]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

A great fighting game between two young prodigies.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7

Ding Liren chooses his favorite King's Indian Defense.

4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7

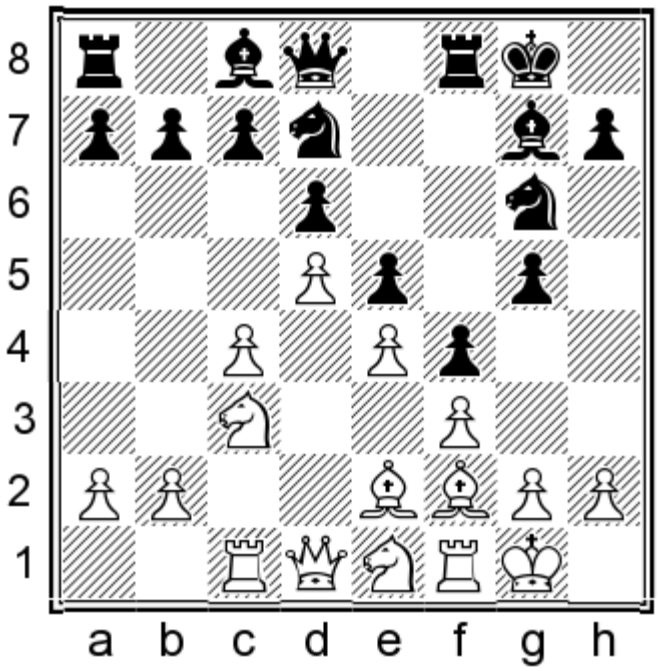
The initial position of the KID main lines. White has a wide choice here and Wesley So decides to repeat the line in which he suffered a defeat to Nakamura recently.

9.♘e1 ♘d7 10.♗e3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗f2 g5 13.♖c1

This is the deviation from the afore-mentioned game, but of course it is not a new idea, just another main move with thousands of games in the database. That game continued with 13.♘d3 ♘g6 14.c5 ♘f6 15.♖c1 ♖f7 16.♔h1 h5 17.cxd6

cxd6 18.♘b5 a6 19.♘a3 b5 20.♖c6 g4 and Black mated his opponent in a beautiful game, which I have commented on in a previous issue. So-Nakamura, Saint Louis 2015.

13...♘g6



14.c5!?

A well-known line involving a pawn sacrifice. The main strategy for White is to open the queenside, where all his pieces are focused, and to gain enough benefits there before Black's attack on the other side can break through.

14...♘xc5

This is the only way. 14...dxc5? is a huge positional mistake. Black's position falls apart after 15.b4! cxb4 16.♘b5+– and the c7 pawn cannot be defended.

15.b4 ♘a6

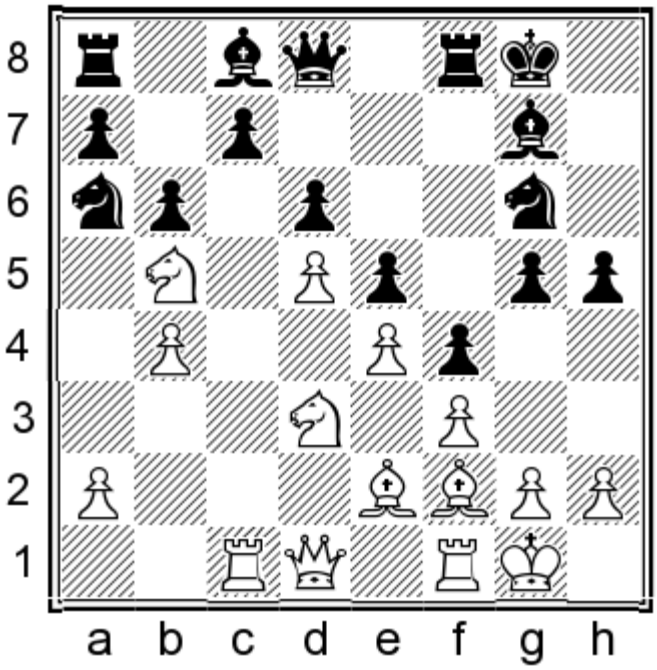
The only retreat, as 15...♘d7 is met by 16.♘b5 and the c7-pawn falls. However, now the knight goes to the edge of the board and will stay there forever. The c-file has opened and White has long-term pressure on the c7- and a7-pawns with ♘b5. Another important point is that the knight has gone to a6, while in the other lines (also in the So-Nakamura game) it goes to f6 and perfectly supports the attack with ...h5-g4.

16.♘d3 h5

Black must try to attack on the kingside, even without his knight, as it is clear that White is much stronger on the other side of the board.

17.♘b5 b6

This is new on the highest level.



Most games here continued with 17...♗d7 18.a4 which was even played by Kasparov, who ended up in a very bad position after 18...♗h6 19.♖c3! The rook is very well-placed on c3, ready to exert pressure on the c7-pawn after ♕c2, ♖c1 and also defends along the third rank whenever Black pushes g4. 19...b6 Here comes a great plan, which Wesley So also employs in his game: 20.♗e1! ♖f7 21.♘f2! A prophylactic regrouping to fight against Black's main attacking idea, connected with g4. 21...♘h4 22.♘xd6! Probably this is the reason why Ding Liren kept his bishop on c8: to have the a6-knight protected. 22...cxd6 23.♗xa6 White has won back the pawn with a big positional advantage, while the Black attack is still far away. Piket-Kasparov, Linares 1997.

18.♗e1!

Just as was shown by Piket. The bishop has already done his job on f2, provoking the b6 weakening and it was no longer attacking the a7 pawn, so now it gives its place to the knight, which will be an excellent defender of the king and against the attack with ...g4. After the knight gets to f2, the light-colored bishop will also be useful on the f1–a6 diagonal.

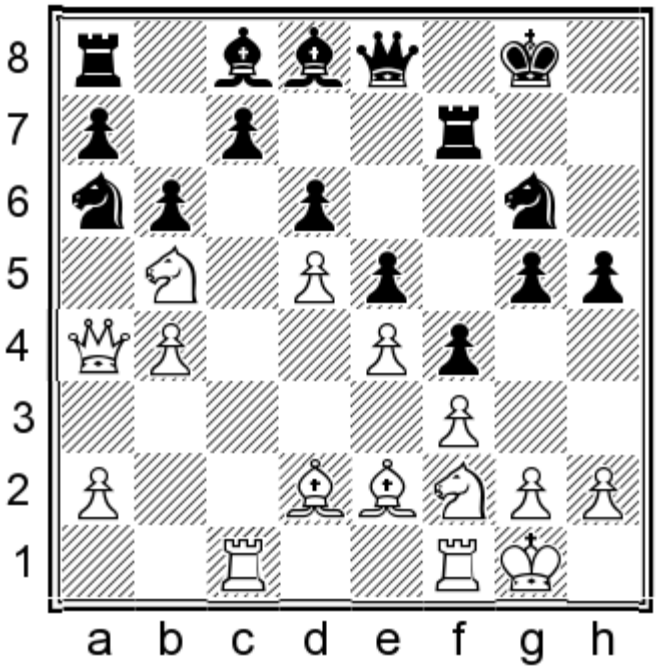
18...♖f7 19.♗d2 ♗f6 20.♘f2 ♕e8!

Very original strategies by both players! White fights against ...g4 with ♘f2, but Black also drives his bishop to d8 and puts his rook on f7 to make it as hard as possible to win back the sacrificed pawn. Black also keeps an eye on the b5-knight, and in a few moves we will see how deep this idea is.

21.♕a4

White keeps an eye on the misplaced knight on a6!

21...♗d8



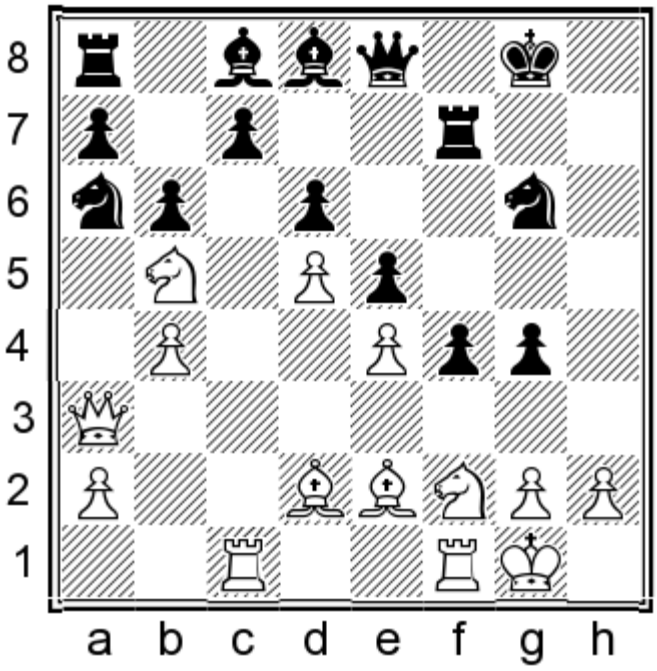
22.♕a3!

The right follow-up to the previous move! White leaves the pin and is threatening ♘xd6 and taking on a6. At the same time, he uses his queen in defense along the 3rd rank, just like Piket did with ♖c3.

22...g4

Black has no time to waste, otherwise he ends up strategically lost on the queenside after ♘xd6.

23.fxg4 hxg4



We can understand the point of 20...♕e8 now! The pawn cannot be taken on g4, because the b5-knight would be

hanging.

24.♘c3!

Removing the hanging knight creates a double attack on a6 and g4! Black must do something drastic, otherwise his position collapses immediately!

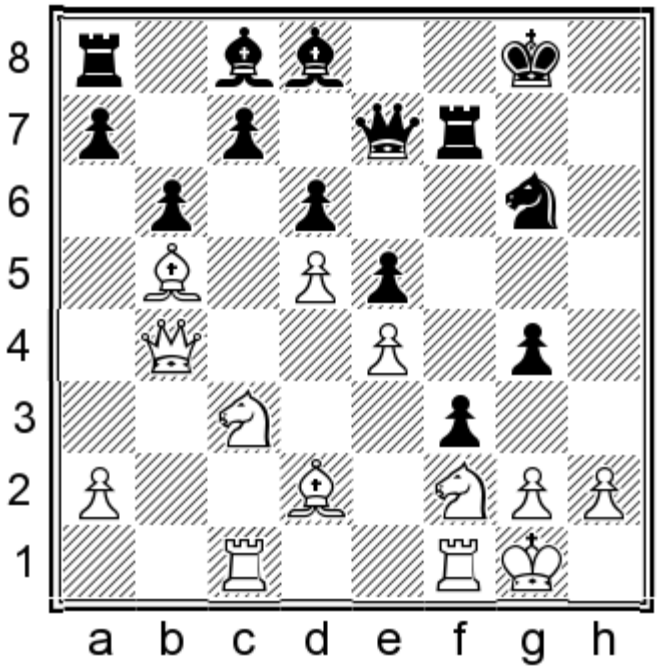
24...♘xb4!!

Some shocking moves are coming now from Ding Liren and the way he proceeds with his attack is amazing! The direct 24...f3 was simply met by 25.♗xa6 fxg2 26.♔xg2 ♘h4+ 27.♔h1 White is in control and he makes a huge step towards a successful defense by trading the light-squared bishops, which is often the key piece of Black's attack.

25.♕xb4 f3! 26.♗b5!

Naturally, White should avoid the opening of the g-file. 26.gxf3? gxf3 27.♗b5 ♕e7 followed by ...♕h4 and ...♖h7, with decisive threats!

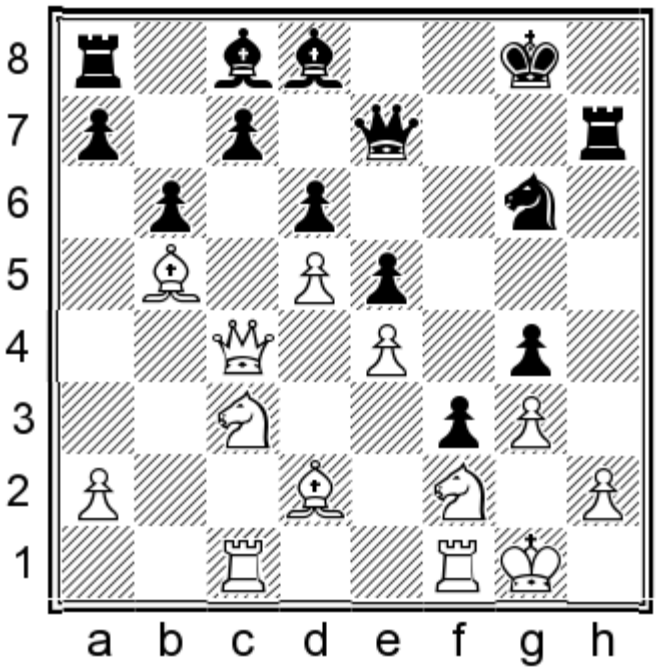
26...♕e7



27.g3!

Preventing ...♕h4! It seems as though White has just ended up with an extra piece and ...♘xb4 was an unsound sacrifice: Black cannot even give a check. However Ding Liren was thinking much deeper than this! He just continues to play like the material was balanced and slowly attacks the h2-pawn (the only target around the white king) with his heavy pieces.

27...♖h7! 28.♕c4



White is ready to invade with ♕c6, threatening the rook and also to trade the queens with ♕e8. It seems to be over, but...

28...♖h8!!

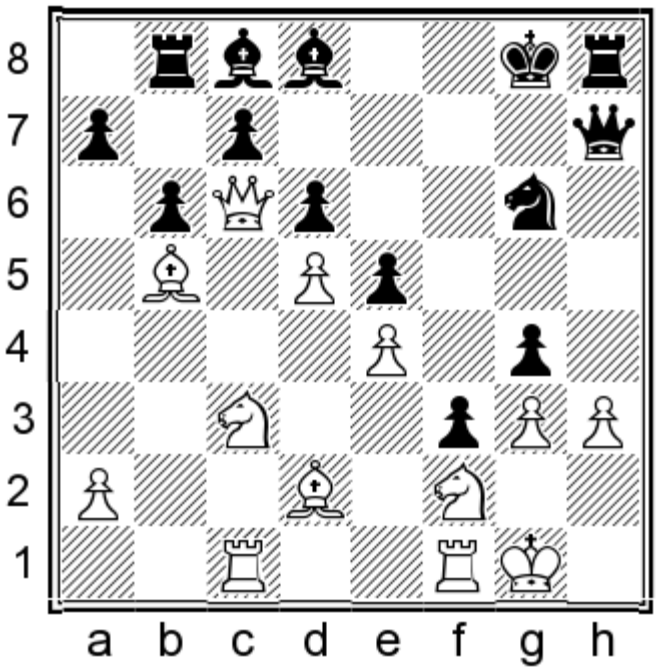
Vacating the h7-square for the queen!

29.♕c6 ♕h7 30.h3!

Standard defense! White should not play h4, because Black could sacrifice one of his minor pieces there, but plays instead h3 with the idea of gxh3 ♔h2 and Black's own pawn prevents him from creating any serious threats along the h-file. The check on e8 is temporarily harmless, as Black simply plays ...♔g7, the queen comes under attack and White has no follow-up.

30...♖b8

The rook cannot be sacrificed of course, as the attack has not progressed far enough at the moment.



31.♘cd1!

A great defensive maneouvre! White drives his knight to e3-f5 and also opens the c-file for his rook to set a hidden trap.

31...a6

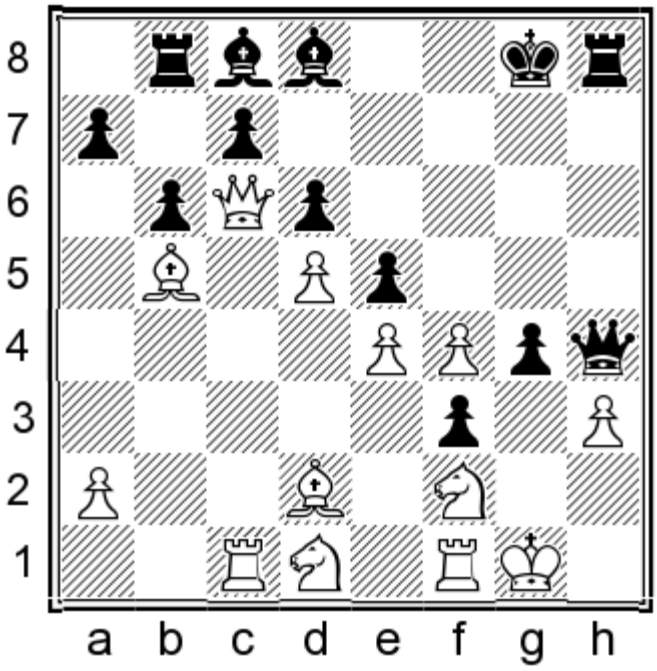
Black wants to send back the pieces, first the bishop, then the queen with ...♗d7 and only after these start the sacrifices, but he misses a beautiful idea... 31...♘f4!? was the key attacking plan, where White must play precisely. 32.gxf4!

(32.♗xf4 exf4 33.e5 fxg3 and White should give perpetual before he gets mated: 34.♕e8+

(*34.exd6 gxf2+ 35.♘xf2 ♕h4 36.♕e8+ ♔g7 37.♕e5+ ♗f6 38.♖xc7+ ♔h6 39.♕f4+ ♗g5 40.♕e5 ♗f6* is another kind of forced draw.)

34...♔g7 35.♖xc7+ ♗xc7 36.♕e7+ ♔g8 37.♕e8)

32...♕h4!

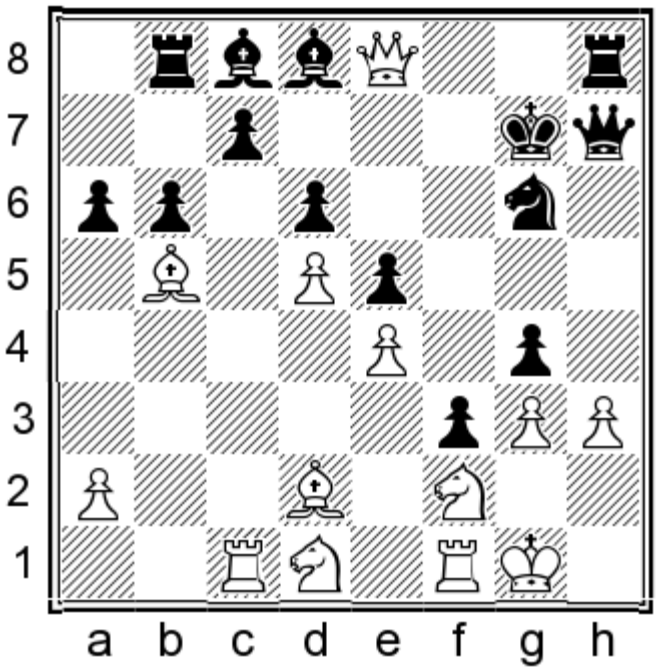


33.♔h1! Only this move seems to give an advantage! 33...♕g3

(*33...g3* is strongly met by *34.f5!* closing the c8 bishop. White has enough material advantage to give back something... *34...g2+ 35.♔h2 gxf1=♕ 36.♗xf1+–*)

Black is threatening to play ...♕g2 and ...♖xh3, but here comes 34.♕e8+! ♔g7 35.♕xh8+! ♔xh8 36.♖g1! ♕h4 37.♔h2! exf4 38.♘xg4± and White has too many pieces for the queen!

32.♕e8+! ♔g7



33.♕xd8!!

This was the fascinating hidden idea behind 31.♘d1! White successfully trades the most dangerous attacking pieces,

gets enough material for the queen and positionally, without giving mate, Black is going to be lost.

33...♖xd8 34.♖xc7+ ♗d7 35.♖xd7+ ♖xd7 36.♗xd7

Black has a queen and a pawn for the 3 minor pieces, but they are soon going to dominate the entire board.

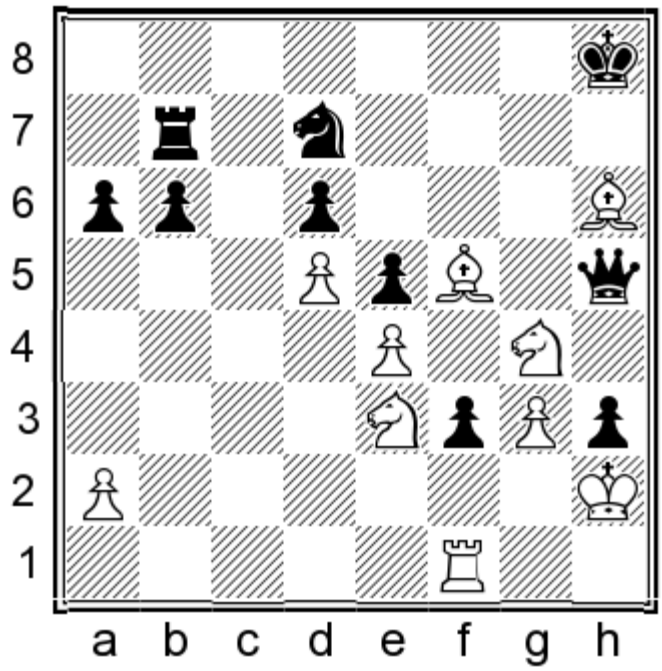
36...gxh3 37.♔h2 ♖b7

White's main idea was ♘e3 and ♖c1–c7, so Black tries to be the first to occupy the c-file.

38.♗e6 ♘f8

38...♖c7 39.♘e3 is also very bad. White controls all the squares on the c-file and he can even play ♗b4 next. Even if he just plays ♘fg4, ♘f5 and ♗g5, those minor pieces are going to crush!

39.♗f5 ♕h5 40.♘g4 ♘d7 41.♗h6+ ♔h8 42.♘de3



What harmony between the white pieces! The black ones, conversely, are just unco-ordinated and remain without a target.

42...♖c7

42...♘f6 43.♖c1!+– is also decisive.

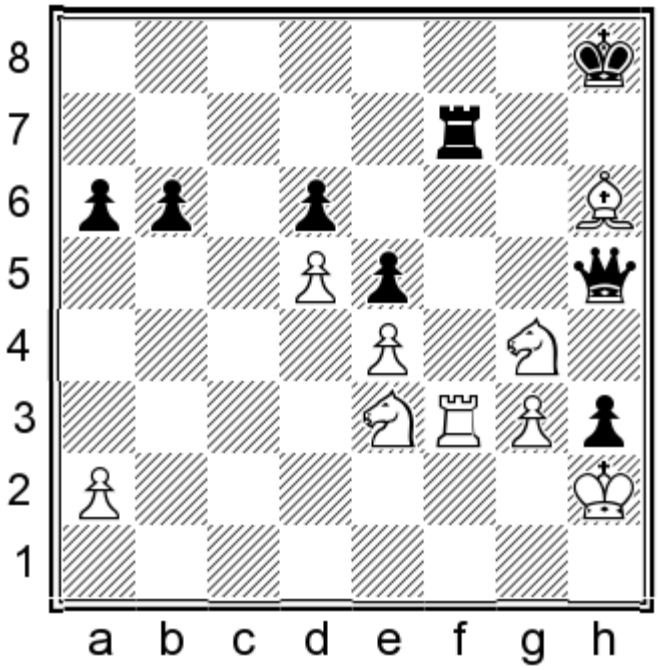
43.♗xd7

The only inaccuracy by So in the game, although his position remains winning. We must also admit that his is the human reaction, but the computers found a more direct win... 43.♗e6! was objectively the best. White wants to play ♖xf3 next and after 43...♘f6 44.♘xf6 ♕xh6 45.♖xf3+– keeps everything under control. An illustrative line of what is going to happen to Black: 45...b5 46.♘fg4 ♕g7 47.♖f6 ♕g5 48.♖f8+ ♔h7 49.♘f6+ ♔g7 50.♖g8+ ♔xf6 51.♘g4++–;

43.♖xf3 ♘f6 is less clear.

43...♖xd7 44.♖xf3 ♖f7

Otherwise the invasion of the white rook on the f-file decides the outcome.



45.♖f5!

Creating a powerful passed-pawn, which thanks to the great support of the minor pieces decides the game.

45...♖xf5

45...♕g6 46.♗f8!+– wins the d6 pawn and Black collapses.

46.exf5 ♕f7 47.♗g5!

It is instructive to watch how well Wesley uses his minor pieces.

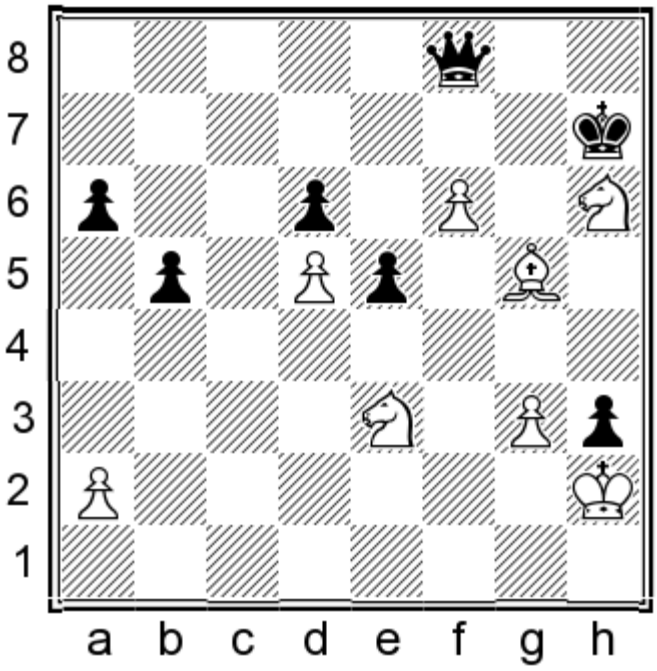
47...b5 48.♘h6!

In the last two moves, White has opened the path for the f-pawn up to the f7 square.

48...♕f8

The point is that after 48...♕g7 49.f6! the bishop is indirectly protected by the h6-knight. 49...♕xg5 50.♘f7++–

49.f6 ♔h7



Black tries to break the co-ordination with ...♔g6, after which the bishop has no good square to go, but the e3-knight also joins the game now!

50.♘ef5! ♔g6 51.♗h4

White is ready to push f7, followed by ♗e7 and f8=♕. Black's only chance is to create some threat with his queen, but of course he is too far from this. He cannot even activate his queen with ...♕c8 at once because of ♘e7!

51...e4 52.f7 e3 53.♗e7!

Perfect technique!

53...e2 54.♘h4+ ♔h7 55.♗xf8 e1=♕ 56.♗xd6!

As simple as that. White promotes his queen, while Black soon runs out of checks.

56...♕f2+ 57.♔xh3 ♕f1+ 58.♔g4 ♕c4+

58...♕e2+ 59.♘f3 ♕e4+ 60.♗f4+– We again see the perfect harmony between the minor pieces.

59.♗f4 ♕e2+ 60.♘f3

Black resigned! A brilliant game!

1–0

GAME 49
M. Carlsen (2850)
L. Aronian (2781)
20th European Teams
Reykjavik ISL (3.6)

15.11.2015, [C65]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

Levon Aronian crushes the World Champion in a brilliant game, which brought victory for Armenia against Norway.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6

The game starts with the usual Berlin Defense. We already cannot be surprised if a top level game sees this opening.

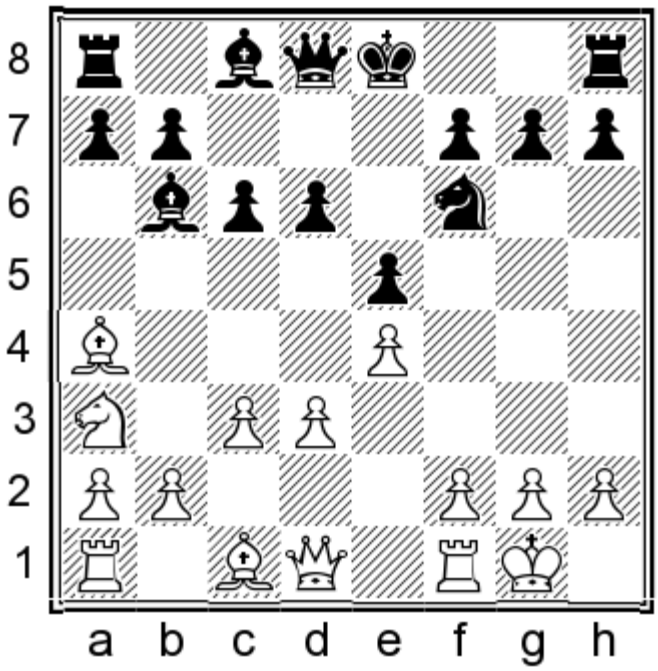
4.d3

Carlsen prefers to play a complex middlegame today instead of allowing the Berlin endgame.

4...♗c5 5.0-0 ♘d4 6.♘xd4 ♗xd4 7.c3 ♗b6 8.♘a3

This move became popular after Topalov reached an advantage against Andreikin with it last year, but of course theory develops very quickly and Aronian was very well-prepared against it.

8...c6 9.♗a4 d6



The main idea of the 8.♘a3 move can be seen in the following line. If Black plays some inaccurate moves like 9...0-0 10.♗g5 h6 11.♗h4 d6 12.♘c4 ♗c7 13.♘e3 followed by ♕f3 with some advantage because of the pin on the h4-d8 diagonal. If Black unpins himself with ...g5, then the knight would get an excellent outpost on f5.

10.♗b3

White improves his bishop with a useful waiting move and also prepares to play ♘c4, as after ...♗c7 Black is threatening the ...b5 fork. Before Black has castled, 10.♗g5 is risky because of an early attack with 10...h6 11.♗h4 g5! 12.♗g3 h5!

10...a5

Black prepares to retreat this bishop on the g1–a7 diagonal and he also delays castling to avoid ♗g5. This deep idea

has been already played earlier this year in a Karjakin-Caruana game.

11.♘c4 ♗a7 12.a4

This is the novelty. Yet another useful waiting move. White fixes the a5-pawn and prevents the ...b5-a4 ideas. Karjakin played 12.♗g5 but then again, Black was fine after the standard attack with 12...h6 13.♗h4 g5 14.♗g3 h5

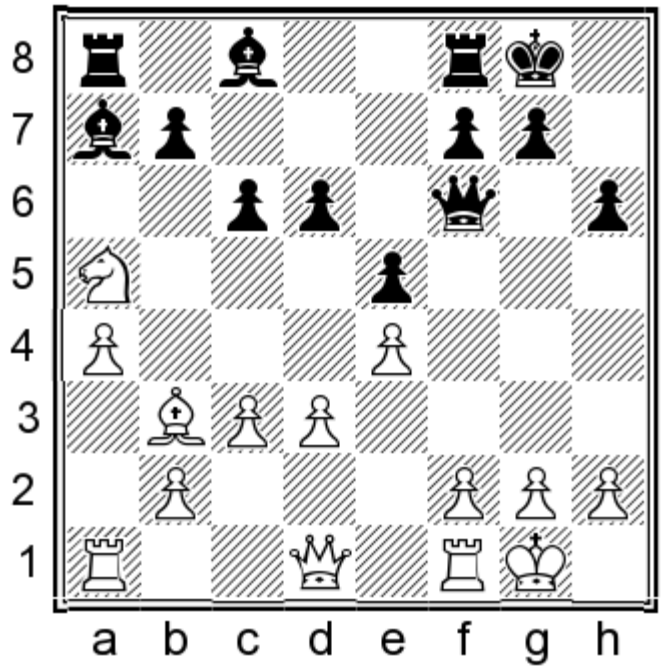
12...0-0 13.♗g5

White finally develops his bishop.

13...h6 14.♗xf6?!

Too greedy a decision; the World Champion goes for the poisoned pawn. The game should have continued with 14.♗h4 g5 15.♗g3 ♗g4 16.♕d2 ♘h5 17.♘e3 ♗e6 This kind of position is quite common in the Spanish. Black either goes ...♘f4 or rather retreats to ...♘g7 to neutralize the f5-hole, and maybe pushes f5 himself at some point. The position remains playable for both sides.

14...♕xf6 15.♘xa5



Black cannot restore the material balance with ...♗xf2 because after ♖xf2 the queen is hanging, but Aronian had a much deeper plan to create long term compensation...

15...d5!

Black opens the position for his bishop pair and cuts off the retreat route of the a5-knight towards his camp. Black is simply threatening to win a piece with ...b6 or ...♗b6.

16.♗c2

Vacating the b3-square for the knight. The tactical justification of the entire idea is 16.exd5 cxd5 17.♗xd5 ♕d8! this pretty retreat creates a decisive double-attack. 18.♗xb7 ♗xb7 19.♘xb7 ♕c7∓ traps the knight.

16...dxe4!

Following principles by further opening the game.

17.dxe4 ♖d8 18.♕e1

A very sad move to make, but White had nothing better. 18.♕e2 seemed to be the most natural, but it also strongly met by 18...♕g5! threatening ...♖d2 and ..♗g4 sending the queen away followed by ...♗f3 or ...♗h3. The main problem for White is that he cannot play f3 because of the a7-bishop. If his king was on h1, he could play ♖ad1 and answer ...♗g4 with f3 consolidating his extra pawn. However this single missing tempo turns out to be decisive. 19.♖ad1 ♗g4–+ wins. 18.♕c1 avoids the ...♕g5 ideas, but it has another drawback in 18...♗g4! and it is not easy to deal with the simple threat of ...♗e2!

18...♕g5!

Black is threatening ...♗h3 and also intends to invade with his rook to the second rank.

19.♔h1

White had no other choice to prevent ...♗h3.

19...♖d2!

All the active moves are coming with tempo. It is clear, that Black's compensation for the pawn is much more than enough.

20.♗d1

Another ugly move, but at least White preserves his only trump in the position, the extra pawn! On 20.♗b3 Black could simply win back the pawn 20...♖xb2∓ keeping all his advantages.

20...♗e6!

Developing and threatening ...♖xb2, which was not possible right away because of ♘c4 which suddenly traps the rook.

21.b4

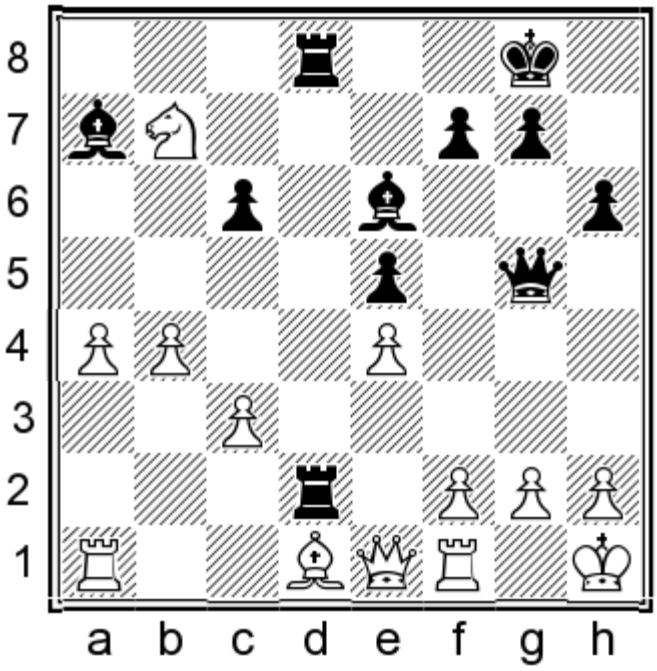
Carlsen still tries to save his extra pawn, but it gives more time for Black to further activate his pieces. He does not even have tricks like f4, trying to cut the queen from the d2-rook, because of the mate on g2.

21...♖ad8!

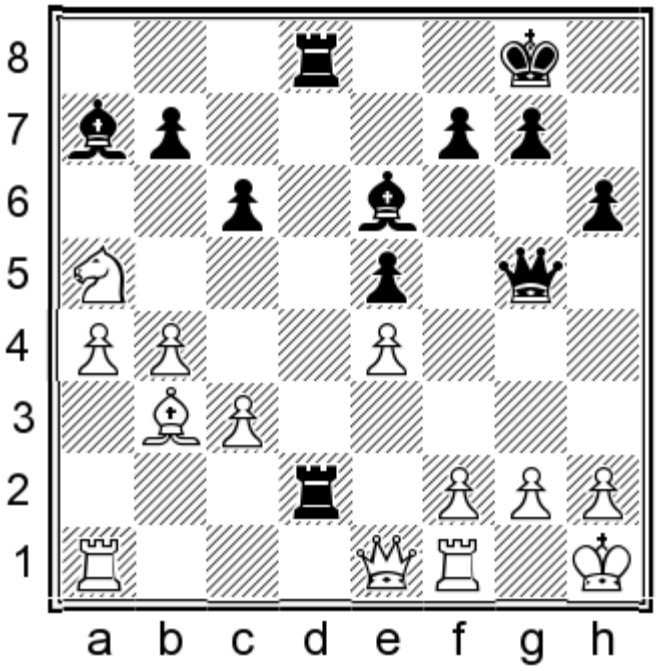
Just great play by Black! Aronian has an excellent feel for finding active counterplay for the material.

22.♘xb7

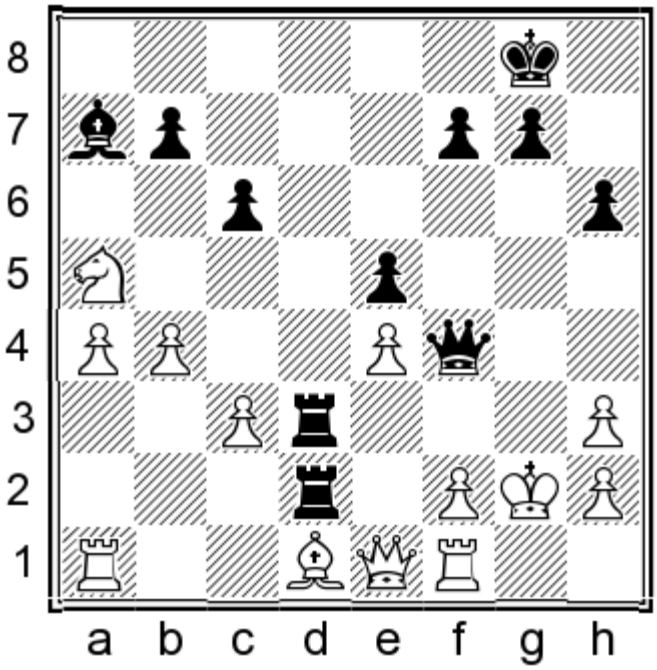
White grabs another pawn and tries to shut down the a7-bishop with ♘c5.



22.♗b3



The following beautiful lines demonstrate well the power of the black pieces. 22...♗h3!! 23.gxh3 ♕f4! An unexpected blow followed by a subtle silent move! Black is threatening ...♕f3 ♔g1 ...♖8d6 and mate on g6. 24.♗d1 (*24.♘c4 ♖8d3!* and the only move to avoid mate is *25.♕xd2! ♖xd2 26.♘xd2 ♕xd2–+* but Black soon takes all the pawns. A nice example where the queen dominates the two rooks.) 24...♖8d3! 25.♔g2



Black wins after 25...♖xd1! 26.♖xd1 ♕f3+ 27.♔g1 ♖xd1! 28.♕xd1 ♗xf2+! 29.♖xf2 ♕xd1+–+

22...♗c4!!

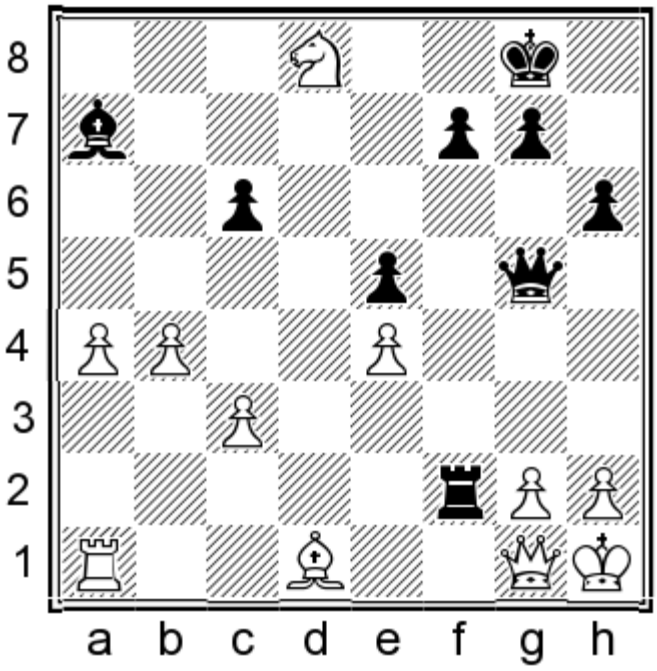
After building up his position, Aronian continues the game with perfect calculation! Black seizes his moment, otherwise after White puts his knight on c5 he can already move his rook to g1 after ♗c4.

23.♘xd8 ♗xf1 24.♕xf1

24.♗f3 loses to 24...♖xf2–+

24...♖xf2 25.♕g1

White is a piece up, but it is easy to feel that something must work for Black. All his pieces are standing actively, while the white ones are standing unco-ordinated at the rim of the board. However Black has only one winning move!



25...♖a2!

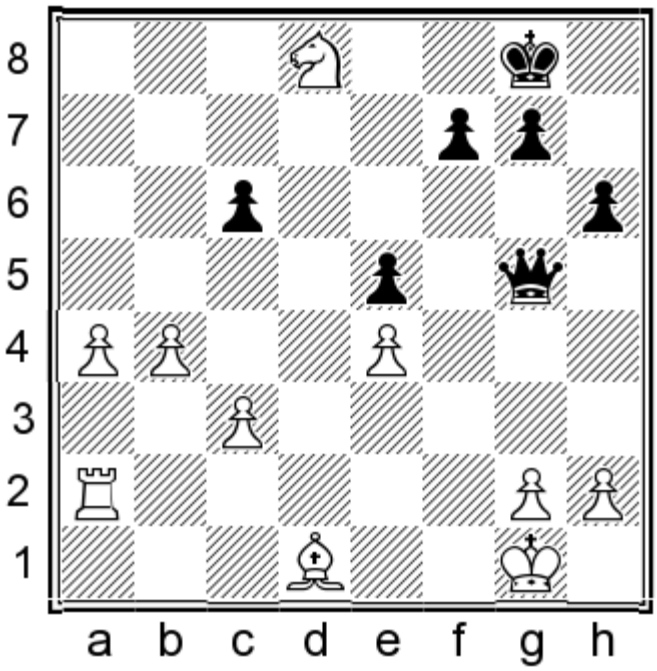
Only this discovered attack on the queen wins material! White's defensive resource was 25...♖d2? 26.♘xf7! counterattacking the queen while the a7-bishop is hanging with check.

26.♖xa2

Only move! 26.♕xa7 ♕xg2#;

26.♘xf7 ♗xg1 27.♘xg5 ♖xa1–+

26...♗xg1 27.♔xg1



27...♕c1!

Another great decision! Black had a choice to take either minor piece. Aronian rightly goes for the bishop, which could have held the white position together much better. 27...♕xd8 28.♗e2 followed by advancing the a-pawn, and I don't believe that Black could have realistic winning chances, despite the computer disagreeing with me.

28.♔f2 ♕xd1 29.♘xc6 ♕b3!

Black starts to collect the pawns. At first sight, these connected passed-pawns might look dangerous, however the white pieces cannot support them properly as the queen has full control over the board.

30.♖d2

If White tries to defend passively with 30.♖e2 ♕xc3 31.b5 Black plays 31...♔f8–+ avoiding ♘e7 check, followed by ...f6, protecting the e5-pawn and then Black goes for the a4-pawn with ...♕c4. White cannot push any of his pawns, as a5 drops b5 after ...♕c5, so he is lacking an active plan.

30...♕xc3 31.♖d6 ♕b2+

Black could have eliminated the queenside pawns with 31...♕c2+ 32.♔e3 ♕xa4 33.♘xe5 ♕xb4 Losing the e5-pawn would significantly improve White's chances of a successful fortress 34.♖d8+ ♔h7 35.♘f3 and the game should most probably end in a draw.

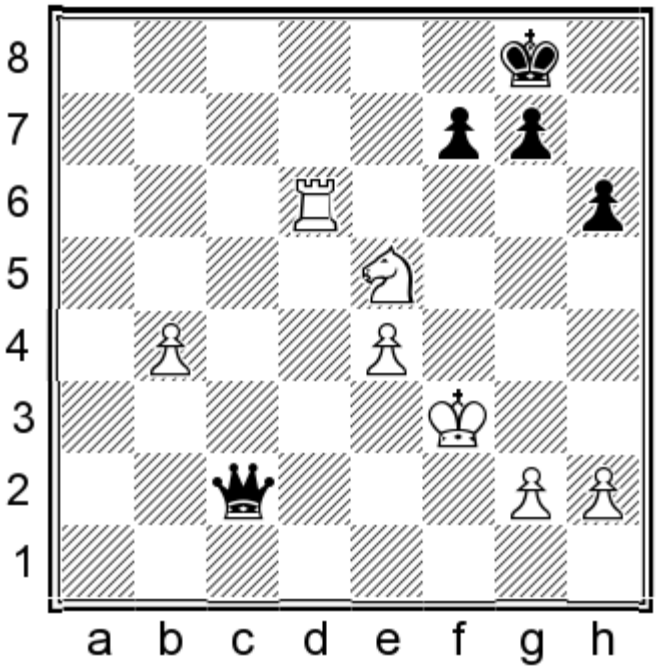
32.♔e3 ♕a3+!

A subtle check to drive the king to the wrong square. The point becomes clear in a few moves. 32...♕xg2 allows the pawns to run 33.a5 White reaches the a6 square as it is indirectly protected by ♘e7.

33.♔f2 ♕xa4 34.♘xe5 ♕c2+!

Black could have also gone for 34...♕xb4 35.♖d8+ ♔h7 when White cannot save his e4-pawn, although he retains some practical drawing chances. 36.♘f3 ♕xe4

35.♔f3



35...f5!!

Very nice. Black could have taken both b4- and e4- pawns, but instead he prefers to trade one of his pawns. Black is actually using the disharmony between the white pieces, all of which are standing in different kinds of geometrical motifs. White is simply unable to save his g2-pawn, which is more important than b4, because then it will be much easier to create a passed pawn.

36.♖d3

36.♖d4? loses a piece after 36...♕c3+ 37.♖d3 ♕xe5–+;

36.♘d3 fxe4+ 37.♔xe4 ♕xg2+–+ the h2 also falls. 36.exf5 ♕xf5+–+

36...fxe4+ 37.♔xe4 ♕xg2+ 38.♘f3 ♕g4+ 39.♔e3 g5!

Black could once again have taken the b4-pawn, but Aronian knows that it is not running away. He rather creates the threat of ...♕f4 followed by ...g4, which wins the h2 pawn.

40.♔f2

40.b5 ♕f4+ 41.♔e2 g4–+

40...♕f5 41.♖d8+ ♔g7 42.♔g2 g4 43.♘d2 ♕e6! 44.♘f1

This loses on the spot, but the game was over anyway. White is simply unable to co-ordinate his pieces. For instance 44.♖d4 loses to 44...♕e2+ 45.♔h1 h5–+ followed by simply advancing the pawn to h3 and giving mate.

44...♕c6+!

White resigned because he loses his rook next move, after either ...♕b6 or ...♕c7 check depending on where the king goes. Just a perfect game by Aronian and a very unpleasant defeat for Carlsen.

0–1

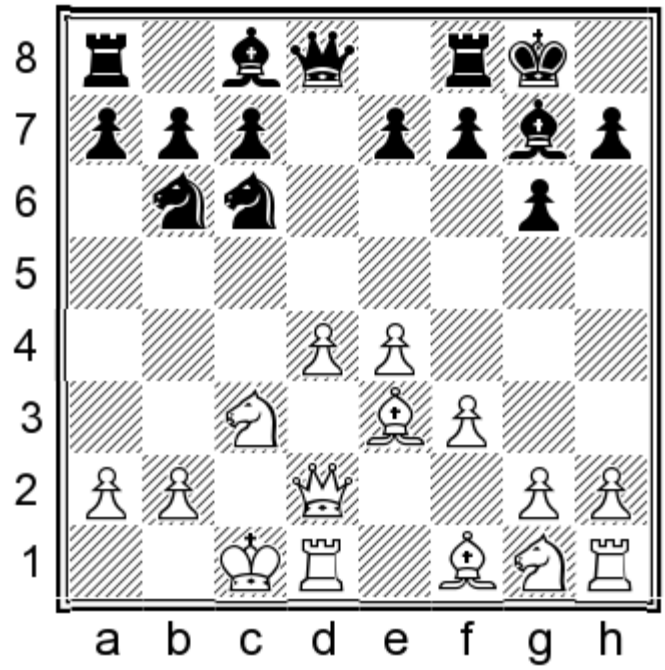
GAME 50
M. Carlsen (2834)
Chao Li (2750)
Qatar Masters Open 2015
Doha QAT (5.1)
24.12.2015, [D70]
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

Magnus Carlsen celebrates Christmas with a crushing victory.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6

Li Chao would like to play his favorite Gruenfeld system and Carlsen goes for the 3.f3 line...

3.f3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 ♘c6 9.0-0-0



The initial position of the 3.f3 d5 line.

9...f5

The development of the theory was the following: the old main line was 9...e5, but the computers have managed to prove some advantage for White. Then Black players started to play 9...f5, but after some nice and successful games by White, it was also considered to be dubious and now the current main move which all the experts play is 9...♕d6. However, Li Chao decides to switch back to 9...f5 ...perhaps for only one game after this defeat.

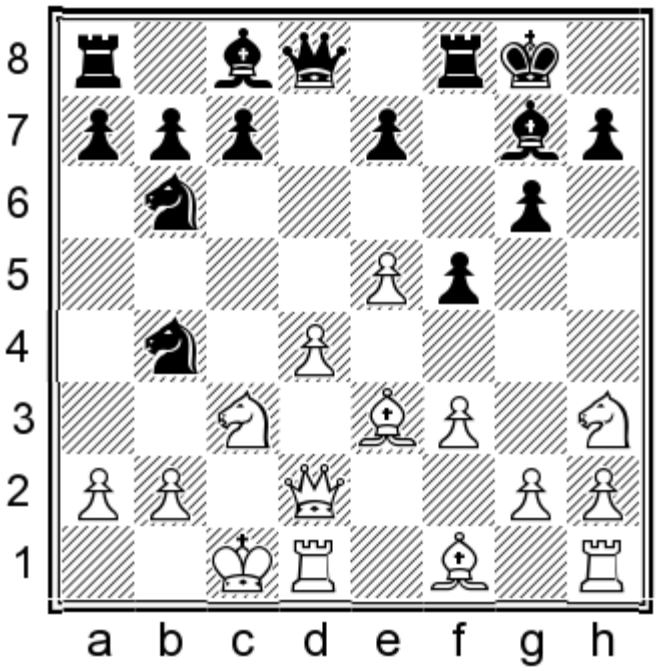
10.e5

The pawn structure has changed. Black has perfect control over the light squares, as after ...♘b4 and ...♗e6, his pieces are doing a great job on all the squares of the a2-g8 diagonal. However there is a huge drawback as well — he actually

‘loses’ his Gruenfeld bishop on g7, which has quite a small chance to re-enter the game.

10...♘b4 11.♘h3!

This is the key move for White to fight against the light squares. ...♗e6 is now met by ♘g5 and otherwise he intends to play ♘f4 followed by launching an attack with h4-h5.



11...♕e8!?

This is the novelty from Black; clearly a prepared one as it was played without thinking. The main point is quite deep. Black prepares to meet ♘f4 with ...g5 (he has just taken the h5 square under control) and when the knight leaves, ...f4 also comes with tempo followed by ...♗f5. A kind of ‘patient’ fight is about to start now, because Black makes all his useful moves, but he has to wait with his key resource of ...♗e6 to avoid ♘g5. On the other side, White also makes all his useful moves, but he also waits with his main idea of playing ♘f4 and h4 to avoid ...g5-f4. Previous games continued with 11...♗e6 but White is considered to be better after 12.a3 ♘4d5 13.♘g5

12.♔b1

Just like in the Sicilian Defense, this is a very useful preparation against Black’s attack. It also protects the a2-pawn.

12...a5

Black protects his b4 knight, and in some lines he is ready to meet the a3 move with some random move, allowing White to take axb4 because after axb4 the opening of the a-file could become very dangerous.

13.♗e2

A nice example to demonstrate the idea behind 11...♕e8 can be seen after 13.♘f4 g5! 14.♘d3 ♘c4 15.♕e1 ♘xe3 16.♕xe3 f4 17.♕f2 ♗f5! Black becomes very active 18.a3 c5! and this is the demonstration of the of the idea behind 12...a5. Black undermines the center to take the e5-pawn and allow his Gruenfeld bishop to enter the game, while axb4 axb4 looks very dangerous for White as ...♕a4 arrives.

13...c6

Another useful move, strengthening the d5 square. 13...♗e6 is still met by 14.♘f4 ♗c4 15.h4! and White has achieved what he wanted.

14.♖c1

Another deep waiting move. In some lines it could be useful to have the c2-square under control to avoid tricks like ...f4 and if ♘xf4 ♗f5 check and on ♔a1 ♘c2 works.

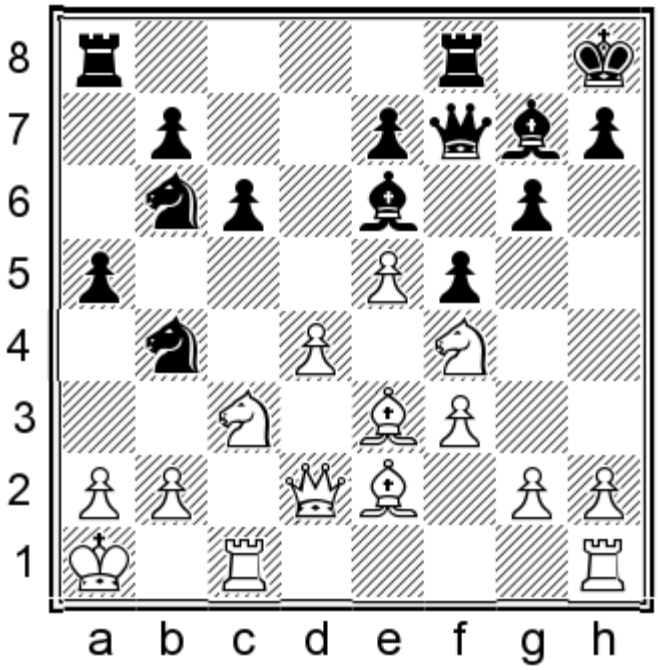
14...♔h8

The final preparation for Black to play ...♗e6. Now after ♘g5 he will be able to keep his bishop on the diagonal with ...♗g8, but on the other hand White wants to play ♘f4 and then after h4-h5 the king will remain within the motifs on the h-file.

15.♔a1!

Another great prophylactic move by the World Champion! Two moves later we will understand his idea!

15...♗e6 16.♘f4 ♕f7



16...♗g8 17.h4 White is coming fast with h5!

17.h4!!

This is the point of 15.♔a1! The a2-pawn is not hanging with tempo, therefore White will not waste any time with his attack on the kingside!

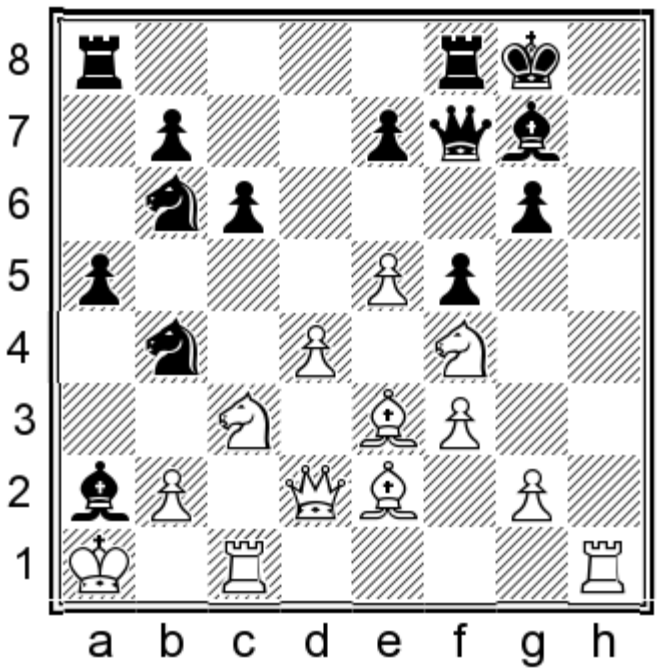
17...♗xa2

17...♘xa2 is met by 18.♘xa2 ♗xa2 19.h5! Black has taken a pawn, but he cannot make progress in the attack. 19...g5 is always met by 20.♘g6+! and the knight cannot be taken.

18.h5! ♔g8

This is a sign that the ♔h8-♗e6 plan was probably still premature. White's attack is rolling now. 18...g5 loses again to 19.♘g6+!

19.hxg6 hxg6



20.g4!

Carlsen opens the lines in front of his opponent's king, but the main point is actually something more hidden. White wants to drop his queen into the attack through h2 after removing his bishop.

20...♗b3

To be able to recapture the f5-pawn with the queen (to avoid an opening of the g-file), the bishop is not hanging anymore on a2. 20...g5 trying to close the kingside with ...f4. However it is strongly met by 21.♘h3! (*21.gxf5* looks also tempting at first sight, but it does not work well *21...gxf4 22.♗xf4 ♕xf5 23.♗h6* could be crushing after ♖g1, but Black has *23...♗xh6! 24.♕xh6 ♔f7* and runs away with his king on the light squares.) 21...f4 22.♗f2 and the g5-pawn cannot be protected 22...♗h6 23.♘xf4!

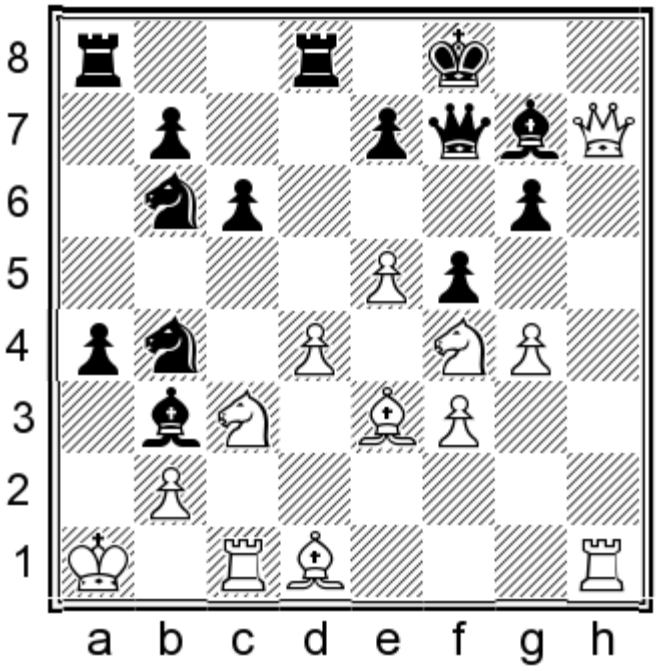
21.♗d1!

Opening the second rank for the queen to h2.

21...a4

The best practical chance. Black must try to attack with a3. Black also needs to control the e6-square, because if he allows e6 the game is over. Let's say, 21...♗xd1, loses to 22.e6! ♕f6 23.♕h2+–

22.♕h2 ♖fd8 23.♕h7+ ♔f8



24.d5!!

A beautiful move to make! Black controls the d5-square with 6 pieces, but still White manages to make the breakthrough work. The b6-knight is hanging and White is threatening again with e6!

24...♘c4

24...♘6xd5 25.e6+–

25.♘xg6+!

A precise move-order! 25.e6?? is less forcing and it allows Black to turn the game around in his favor with 25...a3 26.♘xg6+ ♕xg6 27.♕xg6 axb2+ 28.♔b1 ♖a1#

25...♔e8

25...♕xg6 26.♕xg6 a3 and White mates first now with 27.♖h8+! ♗xh8 28.♗h6++–

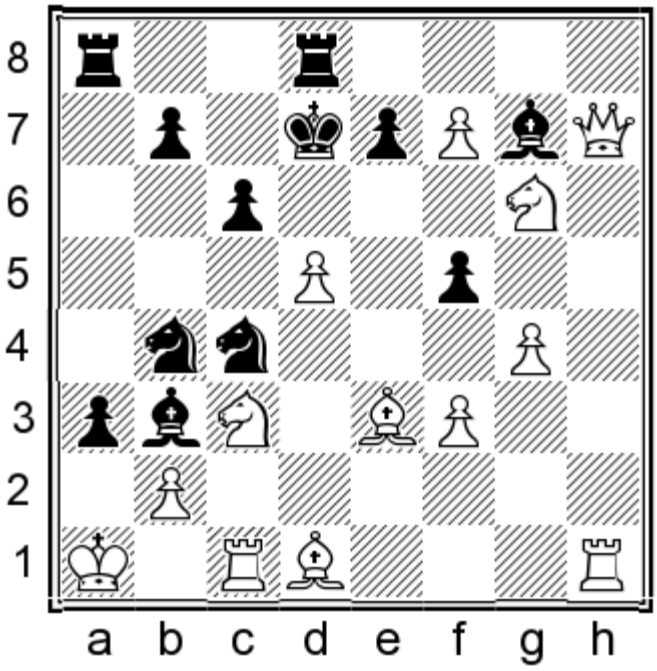
26.e6 a3!

The only move again! 26...♕f6 leads to a quick mate after 27.♕g8+ ♗f8 28.♘xf8 ♕xf8 29.♕g6++–

27.exf7+

A queen for free, but White needs to prevent the mate! There is no time to calm down, as there are so many black pieces around his king.

27...♔d7



27...♔xf7 is also met by 28.♘e5+! deflecting the c4 knight 28...♘xe5 29.♗xb3+–

28.♘e5+!!

Perfect calculation! Everything works with tempo for White. Without the c4-knight, Black's attack would be completely harmless.

28...♗xe5 29.♕xf5+ ♔c7 30.♕xe5+!

White was so much ahead materially, that he could already give back his queen just to remove two attacking pieces from his opponent.

30...♘xe5 31.♗xb3 axb2+ 32.♔xb2 ♘bd3+ 33.♔b1 ♘xc1 34.♖xc1

The complications are over and White is completely winning materially — and positionally as well.

34...♔c8

34...♘xf7 35.dxc6+– and f7 is hanging.

35.dxc6 bxc6 36.f4

Black resigned! What a great game!

1–0